

Florida's theme parks begin reopening with COVID-19 precautions

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — After unprecedented closures in mid-March due to COVID-19, all but one of the Florida theme park resorts have reopened their parks. As expected, along with the reopenings came many health and safety changes. For the parks, it will be far from business as usual for the foreseeable future due to the necessary reduced capacities and new or enhanced health and safety measures. Because of the global visibility of the Florida parks, all industry eyes have been on these parks to see what their reopening plans include, with major focus on what health and safety measures have been made, how they are being administered and how they are being enforced.

The path to reopening began immediately after the parks made the difficult but necessary decision to close indefinitely in March. Soon after closing, the parks, eager to bring back employees and guests, met with local and state leaders, who were also keen to have the parks open, hoping to bolster the struggling economy. After all, it is no secret that the theme parks are major employers, and Florida's main industry is tourism that is driven by these very parks. Florida's local and state governments deferred back to the parks and tasked them with researching and designing their own reopening plans to then be presented for approval. To develop these plans, all of the major parks have said they heavily consulted with health and safety leaders locally and internationally, and took into strong consideration the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Association



Above left, socially distancing reduced ride capacity and safety mask requirements are the new normal at most of Florida's theme parks for the foreseeable future, as seen on Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure at Universal Orlando Resort. Upper right, a team member at SeaWorld Orlando welcomes guests back to the park, which reopened on June 11. Bottom right, Legoland Florida uses a Lego brick theme for their ground placards that serve as social distancing guides. AT/DAVID FAKE



of Amusement Park and Attractions (IAAPA), which created a guide map to reopening for its members. IAAPA also happens to be headquartered in Orlando. The plans that the parks brought back for review and approval were individually presented. Ultimately, every proposal was green-lit, and the parks began announcing their reopening dates and plans. Then, after almost three months of closures, the parks began to reopen, one by one.

Legoland Florida Resort in Winter Haven opened on June 1. Universal Orlando Resort's three gates, Universal Studios Florida, Islands of Adventure, and Volcano Bay opened to the public on June 5 after several days of soft opening exclusively for team members, then passholders. SeaWorld Entertainment followed suit on June 11 by opening its three Orlando parks,

SeaWorld Orlando, Aquatica Orlando, and Discovery Cove, as well as the company's two Tampa parks, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay and Adventure Island. In the Theme Park Capital of the World, it is only the original theme park giant, Walt Disney World Resort, whose six parks remain shuttered, but are currently scheduled to begin reopening on July 11.

While Legoland Florida, Universal Orlando Resort and SeaWorld Entertainment parks have led the way for major theme park reopenings in the U.S., it is important to note that they were not the first parks to reopen in Florida. Orlando's smaller parks Fun Spot America, Gatorland, and ICON Park's Orlando Starflyer, Madame Tussauds, and Sea Life Orlando Aquarium attractions all opened over two days, May 22 and 23, more than a week before the first of the major

theme parks.

When it comes to the specifics of the parks' new and enhanced health and safety measures, there are many. So many, in fact, all of them could not possibly be addressed here. However, on AT's visit to the parks, observations and comparisons were made that seemed the most important to share.

Immediately recognizable was that the parks shared many aspects of their reopening plans. The most obvious of these is the requirement to make online reservations before visiting the parks, and upon arrival, the new no-contact, instant temperature screenings for all guests prior to park entry. Even before guests go through the required security screening and bag check, team members take each guests' temperature. If a guest registers an elevated body temperature ($\geq 100.4^\circ$), the guest and their

party will be asked to wait in a temperature-controlled environment for several minutes after which their temperature will be taken a second time. If the guest again registers an elevated temperature, they and their entire party will not be granted entrance and will be asked to return at another time to enjoy the park.

Additionally, all parks are smattered with new signage informing guests of new operating procedures, health and safety requirements and reminders of best practices for washing hands and socially distancing. Also common are the social distancing markers on the ground wherever there is potential for lines or groupings of guests. The markers appear at all temperature screenings, security screening, restrooms, retail shops and carts, food and beverage queues,

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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

AT NOTEBOOK: Gary Slade, gslade@amusementtoday.com

Industry needs bigger voice



Slade

With the exception of just a few states, U.S. amusement parks, water parks, FECs and LBEs are in their ramp-up to opening mode or have already opened. We give thanks for their reopening.

There is no question each park will have to find its own unique way to keep the guests entertained based on local expectations, knowing some parts of their guidances may differ from other areas of the country, all while delivering a fun-filled day in a safe, clean way.

An early observation that AT has been made aware of by park owners is that — in some facility settings — guests do not want to wear cloth masks while riding rides or just walking on the hot walkways. On a positive note, however, guests are using a lot of hand sanitizer and are using it often — so stock up!

As parks and fairs awaited reopening news from each state's governor, several things came into view that our industry must address should another crisis hit:

- In many states, parks and carnival owners reported to us that they felt their state elected officials had no idea how the park business model worked and, most importantly, had no clue as to their limited operational calendar and reliance on time needed to ramp up their operations.

- Also clear was that as various groups and associations established committees to write reopening guidances, most were written with the large parks in mind. These guides provided limited support for the small family-owned parks or FECs, with no scaled-down guidelines offered.

While watching the national news during the pandemic, the stories focused on home package delivery services, restaurants, cruises, casinos and vacation resorts almost daily. When our industry would be mentioned, it would only be a 30-second snippet about the big parks traded on Wall Street. The rest of the amusement industry was forgotten, as was the enormous strain the pandemic has placed on the uniquely skilled industry suppliers.

It's time our industry planned for a bigger national voice, so the next time we find ourselves in a crisis, all of our voices will be heard and not pushed down the return call list.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY VOICE: John Hallenbeck, Executive Director and Vice President, IAAPA North America

Emerging together

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have brought extraordinary challenges, stress and uncertainty for all of us around the world. As a global community, owners and operators in the attractions industry have been taking important steps to ensure the continued health and safety of guests and staff remain the number-one priority, as important new protocols and procedures are added to their facilities.

We are halfway through 2020 and are seeing more facilities continue to reopen in their communities — where guests are once again enjoying their favorite attractions. To ensure safe reopenings, attractions are following recommended guidance from IAAPA and other industry associations, public health authorities and local governments.

And while parks are reopening, and we are seeing guests return to their favorite park, zoo or attraction, it is important to remember we all have a partnership with our guests and



Hallenbeck

team members. Everyone must take an active role in following enhanced safety procedures. Guests should be encouraged to visit the park's website to understand new guidelines. Prior to visiting, guests should consider their own personal health and limitations and be prepared to follow the park's procedures and policies upon arrival. And operators must continue to communicate openly and honestly with our employees, our partners, and our guests.

COVID-19 has impacted the entire world and has challenged our everyday way of life, but it's also made us stronger. I'm incredibly proud of my team in North America and our IAAPA colleagues around the world as they provide support to this dynamic and resilient industry. With each reopening we see, our industry continues to reemerge, and families are turning to us to provide the same fun, safe and memorable experiences we always have.

We truly are all in this together.

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the columnist(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.



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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Clint Novak, Fun Land of Fredericksburg

A roller coaster enthusiast at heart, **Clint Novak** has found himself in his dream job in the amusement industry as general manager of **Fun Land of Fredericksburg**, a popular FEC in the Virginia/Maryland/D.C. area. With go-karts, laser tag, miniature golf, batting cages and arcades, this family attraction specializes in birthday parties and group events and prides itself on a focus for guest service. Clint has a passion for visiting other amusement facilities and interacting with the industry. His sense of humor, work ethic and enthusiasm keep him right on track!

Title: General Manager.

Number of years in the industry:

I have been going to IAAPA as a part of the media since 2005. I worked a summer at Valleyfair! in 1999, but did not start working full-time in the industry until 2014.

Best thing about the industry:

I love the people who make up the fans and industry professionals. I feel like everyone is so passionate about what we do and loves to share stories with each other.

Favorite amusement ride:

Fury 325 at Carowinds.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ...

I was a radio DJ prior to the amusement industry so I'm sure I would still be doing something like that.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ...

The midway. I love being on the midway with the guests and talking with them. I also like going to other midways as a guest.

One word that described my hair during shutdown would be ...

Poofy!

I found myself watching this TV show most often during quarantine ...

The Goldbergs.

While under "shelter in place," I found out this about myself ...

I never stopped working.

If we have to go under another shutdown ever again, I will ...

Keep on working!

One month ago today, I was ...

probably working (there's a theme here).

Favorite breakfast food:

Cracker Barrel pancakes.

When I need advice, I turn to ...

Professionally, we have a circle of FEC owners and GMs that share info. We talk at least once a week as a group, but will often call each other through the week for advice. I try to borrow as many ideas as I can from Jeff at Go Karts Plus ... and Erik at Adventure Park takes all my best ideas and makes them better at his park.



With a passion for amusement facilities, Clint Novak is enjoying his dream job as the general manager of Fun Land of Fredericksburg. He's maintained his sense of humor throughout the recent COVID-related industry shutdown.

COURTESY FUN LAND OF FREDERICKSBURG

The person I would most like to take a road trip with is ... Taylor Bybee from Coaster Studios, Pete Owens from Dollywood, and Adam House.

You are at the movies ... what is your choice of snack?

Large popcorn, Mountain Dew and Raisinets!

My all-time favorite Michael Jackson song is ...

"Billy Jean."

It's Friday night at 7 p.m. Where can we typically find you?

If I am not at Fun Land working, I am at Kings Dominion or another amusement park.

My favorite summertime drink is ...

Something frozen and fruity!

The first thing I do when I get home from work is ...

Say hello to my two cats Twisted "Timbers" and Phoenix, then enjoy some TV time with my wife. Unless Kings Dominion is open, then we go straight there!

Favorite place to hang out on a rainy day:

My house ... watching TV or playing games.

Something I own that would surprise my friends is ...

A Tesla.

The last thing I bought that I now regret would have to be ...

Again, a Tesla... I accepted it on March 13 and on March 15, the world shut down.

Ultimate fried food:

Deep-fried Oreos!

The one thing I am most looking forward to this summer is ... Being able to travel and visit industry friends at their parks.

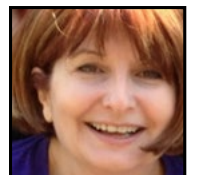
THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Teddys on the tracks



SAN DIEGO — Belmont Park's Giant Dipper roller coaster was closed to the public in mid-March when stay-at-home orders were announced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 95-year-old ride must be operated multiple times a day to keep its machinery from tightening up. The park loaded a dozen or so giant stuffed animals into the coaster's 24 seats in May, and the plush creatures have since been riding the rails to give passersby something to smile about. COURTESY BELMONT PARK

Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

An iconic cowboy endures

David Russ, who has overseen games operations at the **State Fair of Texas** in Dallas since 2008, loves golf. In 2012, he and the fair's games warehouse manager, **Richard Mankel**, were invited to play in a pro-am golf tournament taking place at a nearby course just a couple days after the fair's conclusion. David's boss, **Rusty Fitzgerald**, senior vice president of midway operations, said they could participate only if David and his crew wrapped everything beforehand — including the huge task of dismantling the fair's nearly four-story-tall cowboy statue, Big Tex.

The then-60-year-old, steel-framed figure, sporting outsize Western wear and containing a hydraulic system for movement, would see them to the tee-off in dramatic fashion.

The Friday before the fair closed, a coworker radioed David in panic: "Big Tex is on fire!" At the scene, David found Rusty directing firefighters while thousands of fairgoers watched the statue burn. Once the electrical panel-sourced fire was extinguished, David secured Big Tex's detached belt buckle in his golf cart and examined the figure's scorched steelwork. He watched along with others sadly as the frame was transported to a storage barn.

David then walked over to Rusty, who was a man of few words, and said, "I guess we get to play in the golf tournament now." Rusty laughed, breaking the tension of that horrific and historical day for the fair.

A new version of Big Tex debuted in 2013. And David and Richard developed a deeper respect for the icon that superseded their love of the links.

Lottie Minick is a 46-year attractions industry veteran and co-owner of Dallas-based Minick Associates, a design firm founded by her late husband, Bob. Her monthly column features behind-the-scenes anecdotes of her own and from those who have worked in the business. Got a fun industry story? Email lottie@minickassociates.com.

Amusement Today, industry leaders honored with NEAAPA awards

SACO, Maine — The New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (NEAAPA) has announced its 2020 Annual Meeting Awards.

Alan E. Ramsay Safety Award

Recipient — **Gary Slade**, publisher, *Amusement Today*, Arlington, Texas. The Ramsay award is presented to an individual who has demonstrated “an unparalleled commitment to safety in the amusement parks and attractions industry.”

“We’re certainly pleased to receive this accolade from NEAAPA,” Slade said. “Our team has been dedicated to presenting timely information related to safety throughout the industry for years. *Amusement Today* devotes numerous pages in each edition to the latest safety news as well as a listing of upcoming safety seminars. We greatly appreciate being recognized for the work we have done to promote the most important aspect of the amusement industry.”



Slade

Paragon Award

Recipient — **Sara Seay**, director of sales and marketing, **Premier Rides, Inc.**, Baltimore Md. The Paragon Award is presented to an attractions member that has created outreach or advertising pieces that demonstrate “unequalled excellence in graphic promotion.”

“I am both humbled and honored that the New England Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions selected me to receive the prestigious Paragon



Seay



award,” she said of the honor. “I am fortunate to have an amazing and talented team at Premier Rides, and they certainly deserve much of the credit for the success of the Tigris marketing campaign.”

She continued, saying “For all of us, it was an honor to work with **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** and **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay** to promote Tigris. From the ‘sweet reveal’ press event in our booth during IAAPA Expo, to social media construction updates and opening announcements, to the concentrated push to vote for Tigris in the *USA Today* poll, the synergy between our teams allowed us to not only #TakeOnTigris but to promote it to become the #1 coaster on *USA Today*’s 10 Best Amusement Park Attractions list!”

Pinnacle Award

Recipient — **Angela Antonioli**, **Lake Compounce Theme Park**, Bristol, Conn.

The Pinnacle Award is presented to an employee or team that has demonstrated “peak perfection in customer service.” A cash award of \$500 accompanies the honor.

The awards, officially announced recently by

the organization, were scheduled to be presented at NEAAPA’s annual meeting slated for last March. Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the gala event had to be postponed with a new tentative date of Oct. 19-21 in Nashua, N.H. Recipients will receive their awards at the October meeting.

NEAAPA Hall of Fame

NEAAPA also previously announced two inductees into its Hall of Fame. Industry icons **James Patten III** and the late **Haig Gulezian** will be inducted into the prestigious hall in October.

The gala event will take place during NEAAPA’s 107th Anniversary Education Conference & Annual Meeting at the **Radisson Nashua Hotel**.

Patten, a past secretary, vice president and president of NEAAPA, served as general manager at the former **Shaheen’s Fun Park**, also referred to as **Fun-O-Rama**, in Salisbury Beach, Mass., while Gulezian was known as an entrepreneur in the amusement industry and had other business ventures.



Patten



Gulezian

The complete Hall of Fame article may be seen at neaapa.com/new-england-news-archive. The online archive is presented by *Amusement Today*.

Nominations for the 2021 NEAAPA Hall of Fame and Annual Meeting Awards will be accepted soon at neaapa.com.

—Ron Gustafson

►FLORIDA

Continued from page 1

and, of course, ride queues. All parks have eliminated single rider queues and heavily promote their newly enhanced web apps that include maps, wait times and now health and safety information. At some parks, the apps also include virtual queue registry for the more popular attractions which tend to have long lines.

Each of the resorts also has several unique aspects to their reopening and operation procedures. For instance, Legoland is the only major Florida theme park that does not sell masks and does not require masks to be worn by guests. However, masks are strongly encouraged and available, complimentary, if a guest would like one. Legoland Florida has turned off all water fountains for safety reasons and has added more than 200 hand sanitizing stations. The SeaWorld Entertainment parks have vast quantities of hand sanitizer readily available every few hundred feet throughout the parks, while the Universal Orlando Resort parks only have hand sanitizer available for purchase (unless you are boarding a ride vehicle). The Universal Orlando parks do have additional signage in walkways near

every restroom that remind and encourage guests that routine and proper hand washing is strongly encouraged.

As for sanitizing ride vehicles, at Universal parks, hand sanitizer is required and a single squirt of which is administered to each guests’ hands by a team member before boarding an attraction. The ride vehicles are only periodically disinfected. The SeaWorld parks disinfect their ride vehicles after every guest. Legoland Florida, like Universal parks, only periodically sanitizes vehicles. Unlike Universal, however, they do not administer hand sanitizer to each guest before boarding, but it is readily available throughout the park.

While all three parks’ websites and online apps include health and safety information, Universal Orlando Resort and SeaWorld Entertainment parks have an additional message of warning on each page that states, “Exposure to COVID-19 is an inherent risk in any public location where people are present; we cannot guarantee you will not be exposed during your visit” along with a link to “Review Important Safety Guidelines.”

Park leadership has expressed their excitement to be able to bring back team members and again be welcoming guests

to their parks, and they want the public to know that they have been working feverishly to make the guests returns as enjoyable, comfortable, and safe as possible, even in the midst of a pandemic.

Legoland Florida’s general manager, **Rex Jackson**, had this to say when *AT* visited the park on its reopening day: “We feel very good about and are confident in the health and safety measures we have taken. What you see implemented here today is going to be the new normal for the foreseeable future. We truly believe that our guests will respond well to these changes, and they will become part of our regular operation and expectation as guests come in to have that family fun day at the park that Legoland Florida is known for.”

SeaWorld Entertainment’s interim CEO, **Marc Swanson**, told *AT*, “We couldn’t be more excited to reopen our parks and welcome guests back. Over the past three months, we have worked with state and local health officials, third party medical and epidemiology experts, and attraction industry leaders to enhance our strict health, safety and cleanliness protocols. Operating in this environment is new for everyone — and we’re already seeing that our guests are excited to come out and enjoy

the parks with our enhanced safety measures. While this has been an unprecedented time for the industry, we are confident in the resiliency of our business and that we will emerge an even stronger company.”

In an open letter to Orlando guests on Universal Orlando Resort’s reopening day, **Bill Davis**, president and CEO, shared these sentiments: “Today Universal Orlando Resort ends its two-and-a-half month period of closure as we begin a phased reopening to the public. Getting us here has been an in-depth process, and I am incredibly proud of the ways our team members have listened to experts and implemented new operational guidelines for the safety of our guests. At Universal Orlando Resort, we are following what we’re calling the three Ss. That’s screening, meaning we’re taking everybody’s temperature before they enter; sanitization, because we are constantly sanitizing areas and high-touch surfaces in the parks; and spacing, providing markings and reminders throughout our resort so guests can socially distance themselves from other parties.” The heartfelt letter can be read in its entirety on the resorts’ website.

When *AT* visited the three

resorts and their parks, almost every team member encountered at each park greeted guests with a hearty “welcome back!” They, too, were excited to be back to the business of making memories for guests. The genuinely excited and friendly demeanor was palpable and helped put to rest some of the wariness of being in the parks amid a pandemic.

While the parks are now open and ready to welcome guests back, there are still those guests who are not ready for the amusement park experience. Some are still too uncertain or not yet able to venture out into public areas due to underlying susceptibility and risk, even with the new proactive health and safety measures in place. There are also those who are not willing to adhere to the additional measures. The parks realize and understand both viewpoints.

Universal Orlando Resort’s Bill Davis addressed this issue in his open letter: “If you are ready and set to come back, to let loose in our parks and enjoy all our destination has to offer, we are more than ready to welcome you. If you are hesitant for any reason to come back now, we will be just as thrilled to welcome you through the arches when you’re ready as we are today.”

IAAPA announces hosting of first-ever IAAPA Virtual Expo: Asia for July 28-30

ORLANDO — IAAPA, the global association for the attractions industry, announced plans for IAAPA's first-ever online Expo and conference — **IAAPA Virtual Expo: Asia**. The event will take place live daily July 28-30. The three-day, immersive experience will feature new ways to connect global attractions industry professionals digitally, including a virtual trade show floor, education sessions, networking areas and lounges, and on-demand content.

"We are excited to introduce our first IAAPA Virtual Expo to the Asia Pacific market to meet the needs of our members during this time," **June Ko**, executive director and vice president, IAAPA Asia Pacific Operations. "IAAPA Virtual Expo: Asia is a new, innovative way for IAAPA to provide a unique experience for global attractions industry professionals to learn, buy, and connect. And while this event is unlike any other IAAPA has hosted before, it will still deliver high-quality, engaging and important content and opportunities that IAAPA is known for."

IAAPA Virtual Expo: Asia will feature:

•**Virtual Trade Show Floor:** Attendees can visit a virtual trade show and discover innovative products and services from global



exhibitors and suppliers through videos and real-time chats with company representatives.

•**Virtual Education Sessions:** Attendees can learn best practices and explore new trends during virtual education sessions featuring timely topics and industry thought leaders from the Asia-Pacific region. Three education sessions will take place daily. Each education session qualifies for (1) credit hour toward IAAPA Certification.

•**Virtual Networking Areas:** Attendees can virtually meet with their peers and industry colleagues from around the globe in networking areas and lounges to share challenges, get new ideas, and grow professionally.

•**On-Demand Content:** Attendees can also learn at their leisure with unlimited access to on-demand content throughout the event.

•iaapa.org/virtualexpo

Six Flags promotes social distancing, announces mobile food ordering app

ARLINGTON, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** announced the biggest planned rollout of mobile food ordering in the regional theme park space. As more Six Flags parks open with new safety guidelines in place, the program offers a minimal to no-contact process with the use of the Six Flags App.

"Social distancing is a key component of our operations. By utilizing mobile food ordering, guests will spend significantly less time in food lines and more time enjoying their visit. More than 75% of our dining locations now offer this option, with more being added daily," said Senior Vice President of In-Park Services **Bonnie Sherman Weber**. "We are thrilled to offer our guests the convenience of ordering their favorite theme park foods right from the palm of their hands."

The Mobile Ordering process is quick, easy, and includes the following steps:

- Guests download the Six Flags App, and choose mobile ordering;
- Guests select a restaurant with the mobile ordering option;
- They choose and customize their food selections, then pay electronically; and
- The order is confirmed



and guests are given instructions to pick up their order at the location.

All season dining pass offers will be available via the app, and membership dis-

counts will be automatically applied at checkout. Guests can track their order and receive real-time notification when the order is ready.

•sixflags.com



New Discovery at Oaks Park



PORTLAND, Ore. — Oaks Amusement Park is replacing its most popular ride — **Scream'n Eagle (KMG Fireball)** — with a new 30-seat **Discovery 360** from Zamperla. Dubbed **AtmosFEAR**, the ride arrived in late May (above). Anchoring the midway, it will be sending guests 100 feet into the air (right) by early July. COURTESY KPTV, ZAMPERLA



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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

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Central Florida attractions first to welcome guests after closures

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — It was mid-afternoon on Friday, May 22, when Fun Spot America, Gatorland and ICON Park got word from Florida's Governor's office that they were green-lit for reopening after months of being shuttered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a call they were waiting to receive. Immediately after receiving approval, word was out that Central Florida's three leading smaller parks and attractions were reopening, some that afternoon/evening, some the next morning, but all weeks (and months) before their major theme park neighbors. This was their time, and the focus was all on them.

Often Central Florida's smaller parks and attractions see the spotlight on the nearby, much larger theme parks. After all, when it comes to claiming to be the first to debut the biggest or fastest and usually, most expensive attractions and cutting-edge technologies, the big kids on the block are front and center thanks to much deeper pockets.

However, when it came to reopening after COVID-19 closures, these smaller parks and attractions had done their homework and were at the front of the line and ready to claim dibs on "first" after receiving the governmental greenlight (locally first, then state), putting their reopening plans into action, and then opening their gates to guests.

Fun Spot America was the first to reopen its Orlando park mid-afternoon on May 22, immediately after receiving approval. The park welcomed its excited first guests at 2:02 p.m., according to a social media post on the park's Facebook page. The park's reopening plan includes a 50% capacity cap, and new social distancing and



Fun Spot team members disinfect ride vehicles after every guest in addition to alternating rows of guests on the rides and attractions (above left). Gatorland takes health and safety extremely seriously, but added a dash of their kitschy brand to everything they do. For example, Florida lore meets current events with Gatorland's Socially Distancing Skunk Ape.

AT/DAVID FAKE; COURTESY GATORLAND

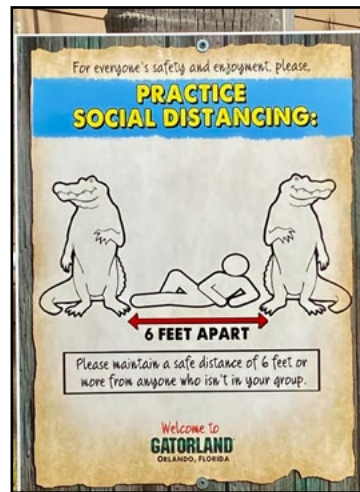
disinfecting measures, which includes boarding only alternating rows, and a complete wipe-down of ride vehicles after each passenger. The park's arcade will remain closed as a precaution until further notice. Additionally, upon its reopening, Fun Spot America is the only park operator that does not require, but encourages, its guests and employees to wear masks, except employees handling cash or food. (All other Central Florida parks have employee mask requirements.) Fun Spot America's Kissimmee park opened on May 26.

Along with Fun Spot America, The Orlando Starflyer, a swing ride at Icon Park, also on International Drive, received approval to reopen on the afternoon of May 22. The attraction reopened less than an hour later at 5:00 p.m. Owner Ritchie Armstrong said, "We were excited to open only an hour after we got the approval from the governor's office, only to shut down two minutes later due to an approaching thunderstorm." The 450-foot-tall attraction closely monitors weather radar and closes if lightning is detected in the area. Ultimately, the ride entertained its first riders

just before 7:00 p.m., after the storm had passed. The attraction sanitizes each swing after each passenger and has expanded their pre-opening and post-closing cleaning procedures with deep sanitizing.

Icon Park's other attractions, Madame Tussauds and Sea Life Aquarium, which operate as museums, were permitted to open a week earlier on May 16, albeit with a new no-touch policy, along with other social distancing and health and safety measures. The Wheel at Icon Park, a 400-foot observation wheel, which celebrated its five-year anniversary during the pandemic closure, reopened to the public on June 3.

A bit farther South from International Drive, Gatorland opened the morning after Fun Spot America and the Orlando Starflyer on Saturday, May 23. With new health and safety measures, such as reduced capacity, social distancing and enhanced cleaning before and after the park opens and throughout the day. The park has added new hand-washing stations and has temporarily suspended performances of their most popular show, the Gator Jumparoo, due to limited space in the area which prevents



proper social distancing.

AT spoke with Mark B. McHugh, president & CEO, during an on-site visit to the park. He conveyed that the Gatorland team worked extremely hard to have the park ready to open, even before it received that final approval. "We initially expected to be closed for about two weeks. So, after we closed, I sat down with the employees and said, 'Even though we're closing temporarily, we're going to keep each of you employed and paid for the duration,'" he said.

"We kept our word, and not a single one of our 190 employees were furloughed or lost pay," McHugh said that it is truly the employees that made reopening possible. He also said that the company was very fortunate to have three very good years leading up to the closure, since the company fully operates on cash reserves. He added, "The only time we borrowed money was to rebuild after the fire. An impressive badge for any company. We worked hard during the closure to prepare for reopening."

If the talk of bragging rights to being among the first to reopen sounds like it is all a big competition between the "big guy" and the "little guy," it really is not

— far from it. These parks know their identities, their brands and their markets, and they know who is and is not their competition. They know how to coexist and how to do so symbiotically.

McHugh put it this way: "Our brand is different than the big parks. We don't try to compete with them. If we did, we'd fail. What we do great is provide a great experience for our guests. We educate, but we also have fun with our brand. It's a Florida, Southern, outdoorsy, woodsy, country fun brand. We're a little bit corny and kitschy, and probably like most people's dads, we think we're funnier than we probably are."

Gatorland's unique style is reflected even in the park's new health and safety measures. They take health and safety very seriously; they just know how to have a good time doing it. Speaking of which, keep an eye out for the Social Distancing Skunk Ape.

As AT was going to press, an executive order requiring facial masks to be worn in public within Orange County was issued by the mayor, Jerry Demings. The order became effective June 20 and lasts indefinitely.

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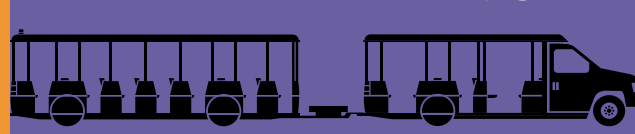
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New boardwalk, pier and park museum beautify the facility

Arnolds Park's numerous improvements enhance guest experience

AT: Tim Baldwin

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ARNOLDS PARK, Iowa — Located in a town of the same name, **Arnolds Park** eagerly welcomed back guests in June. Returning visitors are finding spectacular improvements to the family-friendly summer spot.

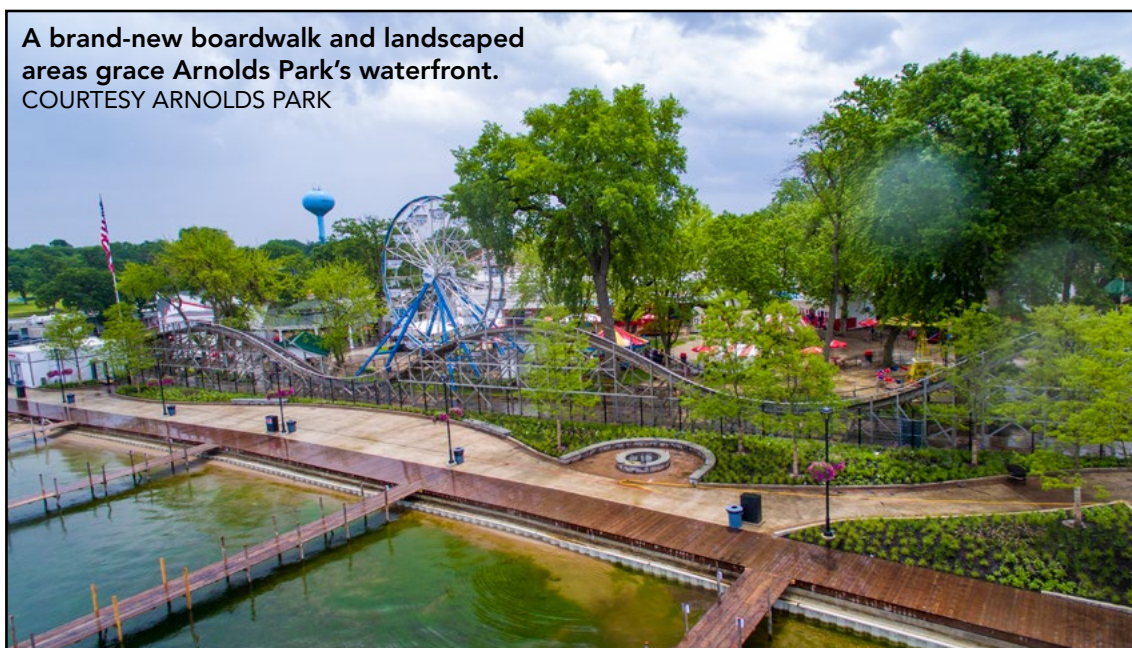
Resting on the shores of Lake Okoboji, the park has loyal fans. With a town population of just more than 1,100 (2010 census), the continued existence of the park is a rare find, not to mention a treasured one. Quite often, real estate surrounding lakefront property is in high demand. Large beautiful homes are easily seen aboard a trip on the park's *Queen II*, docked just outside the front gate.

The first attraction to appear at what would become Arnolds Park was a water toboggan added in 1889. Like any amusement park that has endured for more than a century, it is a tale of live music, roller skates, ice cream, merry-go-rounds and roller coasters. What differentiates Arnolds Park from many other amusement parks, particularly those that have been lost, is that the community has remained small and the residents are fiercely loyal, dedicated to the preservation of the beloved site.

During the park's tougher times in the last decades of the 20th century, the future of the park was in doubt. A momentary scare of it being replaced by condos was fortunately thwarted by city leaders who miraculously raised \$7.25 million in six weeks with a Save the Park campaign. The new millennium has been kinder to the park.

Today, it operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. **Iowa Great Lakes Maritime Museum** was formed to oversee management. The park became an official home to the Maritime

A brand-new boardwalk and landscaped areas grace Arnolds Park's waterfront. COURTESY ARNOLDS PARK



Museum with a new spacious structure being erected in the heart of the property.

In years past, the park has undergone beautifying projects that have included paint, landscaping and upkeep. A complete retracking of the park's signature Legend roller coaster made it glass smooth. A relocated Arrow log flume and an **Alan Herschell Mad Mouse** have bolstered the park's ride lineup. For 2020, the park looked toward the waterfront.

"For many years we thought that area was one we could improve, said **Paul Plumb**, marketing. This year we've had a donor group to step forward."

In 2017, a program called Restore the Park was initiated. A group formed that was willing to provide matching funds up to \$6 million that would be combined with what the park could raise. In all, the full \$12 million was reached.

The first renovation was the reopening of the Majestic Pavilion, a former roller-skating venue that now hosts weddings and corporate events. Much needed infrastructure was put into place to prepare for future projects.

A recent addition has been a museum focused on the history of the park. Utilizing a location of a former fun house, the Arnolds Park Museum was fortunate enough to reacquire some previous funhouse stunts that originally operated at the park. The spinning barrel and sugar bowl are just for display, but visitors can still ride the slide. The museum's foundation was being poured when the opportunity to bring back those attractions became available. Adjustments were made for the slide to fit into the new facility.

Included with that phase was the reconstruction of Roof Garden. Originally built in the 1920s, it was a place for live bands to entertain summer guests as the history of music journeyed from the big band era to swing of the 1930s and '40s and then into rock and roll. It was closed in the 1980s following a fire and was eventually torn down. A brand-new Roof Garden not only welcomes patrons once again but does so embracing the history of the park. It opened in August of 2019.

"It turned out to be a tremendous facility," Plumb said.

"We had several shows kick off its reopening. Five or six of the acts had links to the old Roof Garden, such as **Tommy James and the Shondells**. We had shows throughout the winter."

Currently, COVID-19 restrictions restrict performances.

For 2020, the lakefront is the star project. As the park reopened on June 3, about half of the improvements were completed.

"It's incredible. It's a night-and-day difference from what it was before," said Plumb. "The lakeside area in front of our park had a gravel base. One of the groups doing these renovations at the park is called **Imagine Iowa Great Lakes**. That donor group is not only doing a couple of our projects, but also other projects around the area. They've been a great partner to work with."

A brand-new boardwalk now stretches the length of the park property along the lakefront. A new greenspace area called Preservation Plaza will feature free concerts on most Saturday nights. Eventually the new boardwalk will extend in front of that plaza. When complete, the boardwalk will

encompass 15,000 square feet. A specially treated, highly durable no-maintenance wood was obtained from a Norwegian company for the project.

Other enhancements to the area are a promenade with lighted arches alongside Preservation Plaza and a new facility for the **Iowa Rock 'n' Roll Music Association and Iowa Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame Museum**. That museum's previous location was needed for the new Roof Garden. The new museum features three times the space the original did, which opened in 1997.

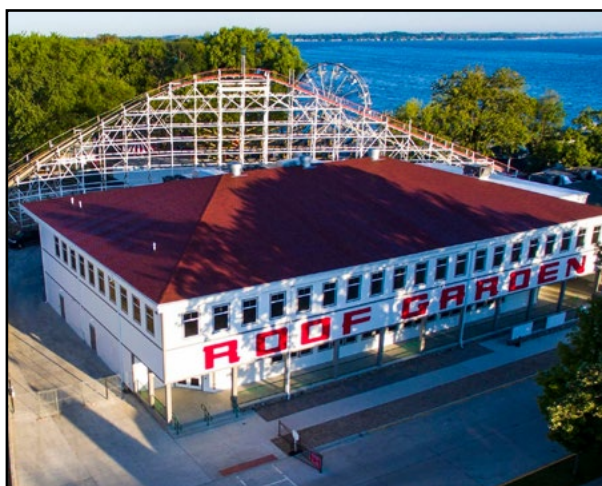
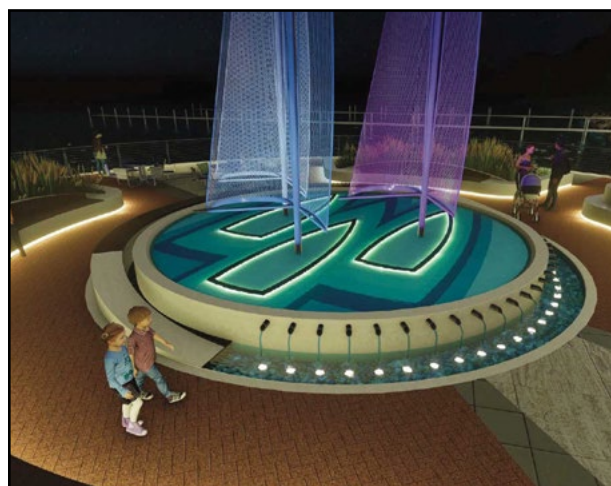
"The new museum is really top of the line," Plumb told *Amusement Today*. "It has definitely become a definite stop when in the Okoboji area."

The State Pier is a final project of the current phase. It rests in the center of the boardwalk. Positioned on top of the water, the State Pier design includes a 5,500-square-foot plaza with a fountain and reflecting pool below three stainless steel sail sculptures. Precast concrete benches with amphitheater seating, decorative paving and landscaped areas will accent the pier. Other touches are an LED handrail and uplighting on the sails and fountain that coordinate with the arches of the promenade.

The park was hoping for a Fourth of July completion date on the pier.

"The park has a place in people's hearts," said Plumb. "From growing up here ... many of them have lake homes here ... they just have ties to the area and love the park. That matching donor pool makes a difference. If someone makes a donation, they are really doubling their money. We're a 130-year-old park, and they want to make sure we are here another 130 years."

Plumb estimates more than 70 donors have given \$50,000 or more.



The reimagined State Pier will feature fountains, lighting and sculptures (left). The new Roof Garden (middle) brings back the feel of the original venue that welcomed musical acts from the 1920s. Classic funhouse elements (right) from the past make a return in the Arnolds Park Museum. COURTESY ARNOLDS PARK

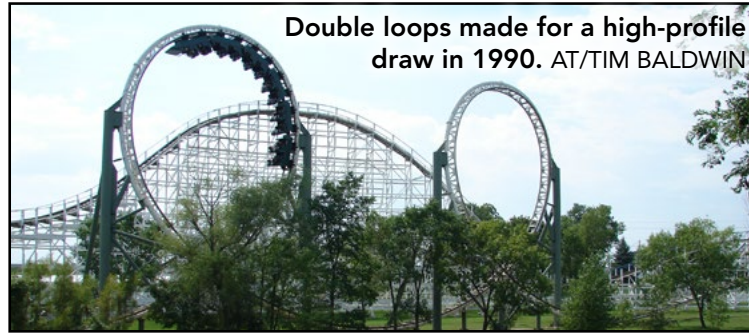
Iowa's Adventureland retires Dragon, hints what is to come in 2021

AT: Tim Baldwin
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ALTOONA, Iowa — During the spring, **Adventureland** has been in the process of removing **Dragon**. The double loop roller coaster was added to the park in 1990. After 30 seasons, **Dragon** has battled its final adventurers.

Adventureland opened its gates in 1974 and put itself on the map with **Tornado**, a wooden roller coaster designed by **Bill Cobb** in 1978. Although two other portable coasters were on property, park management felt it was time for something bigger.

Dragon opened in 1990 as Iowa's only looping roller coaster, which increased the park's marketing reach. The double loop roller was built by **O.D. Hopkins**. The company, now out of business, is remembered for offering smaller parks the opportunity to install a higher-profile steel coaster at a more affordable price than many of



Double loops made for a high-profile draw in 1990. AT/TIM BALDWIN

the other suppliers.

Despite its upside-down elements, **Dragon** was not intense. Judged by today's standards, its layout was simple. Following the first drop, the coaster soared through two back-to-back vertical loops and then traversed a figure-8 maneuver before heading back to the station. A series of small bunny hops over water on approach to the lift hill was the ride's most endearing moment.

"The **Dragon** had become a maintenance issue in the past few years, and the amount of downtime was unacceptable," **Molly Vincent**, director of advertising,

told *Amusement Today*. "The original intent was to retire it mid-season, but with the delayed opening due to the state's shutdown, we decided to get going on the project early, as we did not know when we would be allowed to open for the season."

As the final parts of the structure are being removed, the park has recently teased info regarding 2021. A graphic and the name **Dragon Slayer** have been provided. While there is no confirmation that the new attraction is a roller coaster, a coaster erection company, **SkyHigh Erectors LLC**, has shared the tease on its own site,

giving the assumption of a new coaster some weight. The company has installed multiple rides over the past years. **Maxx Force** at **Six Flags Great America** (Gurnee, Illinois) is the most recent.

"We have been enjoying watching the guesses and sleuthing work by fans after we released the logo on our Facebook page," said Vincent. "We have even gotten some good ideas."

Adventureland serves the greater Des Moines area. While the city is not nearly as populated as some larger markets, the park has still delivered new coasters as quickly as bigger metropolitan areas. **Monster**, a **Gerstlauer** Infinity coaster, opened in 2016, and **Phoenix**, a spinning coaster from **Maurer Rides** opened last season. A big addition for 2021 would make for three new coasters in six seasons — quite impressive considering the park's size.

As the flashier **Monster** has now taken on the role of being

the park's signature ride among its steel offerings, **Dragon** still had a purpose in 1990 of offering a visual, high-profile coaster to lure in crowds.

Some local observers have noted that the park may be feeling pressure from the upcoming **Lost Island Theme Park** in Waterloo, Iowa. That park broke ground last summer and is planned to open in 2022. Adventureland does boast a waterpark, **Adventure Bay**, as well as a neighboring resort hotel. A new roller coaster in 2021 could bolster its place in travel tourism prior to the new park's opening.

In an unrelated circumstance, while prepping the park for its June opening, a small fire ignited under the **Tornado** wooden coaster in late May. The damage only ranged six feet, and park officials said the incident was minor. The wooden coaster opened with the park on June 5.

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Quassy's ship has arrived



MIDDLEBURY, Conn. — Quassy Amusement & Waterpark's new Tidal Wave swinging ship set sail for the U.S. from the SBF/Visa Group manufacturing facility in Italy and arrived at the park in mid-June. Shown above inside the factory and, below, being loaded into shipping containers, the park planned to debut the new ride when it reopened on June 20. Rides 4 U of Somerville, N.J. brokered the sale of the ride to Quassy. COURTESY QUASSY AMUSEMENT PARK



Give Kids The World announces extended closure due to COVID-19



AT/TIM BALDWIN

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — **Give Kids The World Village**, the Central Florida-based nonprofit that fulfills wishes for critically ill children and their families, will be closed for an undetermined period of time due to unforeseen circumstances directly related to COVID-19.

As part of the closure, the organization will be forced to lay off 86% of its staff effective Saturday, June 27, 2020. A small team will remain to ensure the safety and security of the Village and to prepare for their eventual reopening.

Despite the closure, the organization will still be fulfilling the mission to never turn a child away.

"While we're closed, we will still be work-

ing with our wish granting partners to fulfill rush wishes," said **Pamela Landwirth**, Give Kids The World Village president & CEO, in an open letter to their constituents.

"I can promise you that I will work tirelessly to find a way to reopen our beloved Village as soon as possible. The health and well-being of our precious wish children is our number one priority, as well as the priority of our theme park and wish-granting partners," said Landwirth.

The organization will need the support of donors and community partners more than ever. Those who would like to donate to help fulfill a rush wish, or to assist with reopening funds, donations can be made at givekidstheworld.org.

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Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
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Officials at **Kennywood Park**, West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, last month offered a first look at the efforts to restore The Old Mill through pictures taken inside the ride as it is being redone.

The classic ride was replaced by Garfield's Nightmare in the early 2000s, but Kennywood officials announced earlier this year that Garfield's Nightmare was closing and the Old Mill was coming back.

Kennywood's opening date for the summer has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The park will reopen on July 7, starting with four days of operation open only to season pass holders.

The **Georgia Aquarium** in Atlanta opened to members on June 13 and to all others June 15. It had been closed since March 14 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like so many other attractions, the aquarium has instituted new policies to safeguard the health of its visitors and employees.

Tickets are now available only online and must be purchased in advance. They are being sold for specific time blocks. Guests are being asked to arrive on time to ensure the aquarium team has the time to clean and sanitize between all groups. The main entrance is closed right now, and a staff member is guiding visitors to alternative entrances assigned to their block time.

All guests must agree to a contactless temperature scan prior to entering the building. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher will not be admitted.

The Georgia Aquarium strongly suggests that all guests wear masks. Masks are available at the gate for those who might need one. The aquarium staff members are wearing masks for the entirety of their shifts.

Unique experiences, such as swimming with the whale sharks, are temporarily suspended.

The **Myrtle Beach** (South Carolina) **Community Appearance Board** approved a design last month for the **Funplex** amusement park. To be located at the corner of Ocean Boulevard and 15th Avenue North in Myrtle Beach, the lot had been rezoned last year so Funplex could start developing.

Plans are for the park to be about a block long with seven different attractions, including a family roller coaster. It is scheduled for completion by Spring 2021.

Funplex currently has two amusement parks in New Jersey and is looking to branch out to Myrtle Beach's Grand Strand.

The zoo at **York's Wild Kingdom**, located in York, Maine, opened June 20. However, the amusement park portion of the facility is to remain closed for the entire 2020 season.

Park officials said the decision to keep the park closed was difficult to make. However, they felt it was the best decision for the safety of guests and employees due to the coronavirus pandemic. They expect the delayed opening of the zoo and closure of the amusement park for the year will have a significant financial impact. They have asked for donations to the park's emergency operating fund to help offset the loss of ticket sales.

York's Wild Kingdom's hours, rules and exhibits are all subject to change, depending on guidance concerning the coronavirus outbreak.

The **Morey Organization** proposed a major renovation of **Adventure Pier** in Wildwood, New Jersey, at a city planning and zoning board meeting on June 1. The plans, which were approved, are highlighted by the addition of a food hall, with alcoholic sales, and a complete redesign of the front of the pier.

The plan calls for the removal of a number of structures at the pier's base, including the Boat Tag game and current **Kohr Bros.** building, along with the addition of 25 shipping containers, which will comprise the main food hall while complementing the existing artBOX concept.

The food hall will consist of a variety of independent outlets housed in one and two-level containers, with additional food trucks and trailers. Morey's intends to license the entire pier for alcoholic beverage service.

Several examples of the food hall concept were cited in the proposal, including the **Bowery Market** in New York City, **The Yard** in San Francisco and the **Detroit Shipping Co.**

Currently, **Aloha Smoothie Co.** and **Auntie Anne's** operate out of containers near the front of the pier. Kohr Bros. is expected to find a new home within the food hall, along with **Curley's Fries**, bringing the popular Boardwalk institution to all three of Morey's amusement piers for the first time.

The new food hall is expected to be completed for the opening of the season in 2021.

Village Roadshow Theme Parks, located along the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia, are gearing up to reopen to the public with the launch of a brand new Welcome Back campaign.

The new one-minute clip features Village Roadshow CEO **Clark Kirby** as well as footage from all of the group's local theme parks and resorts, including **Warner Bros. Movie World**, **Sea World**, **Wet'n'Wild**, **Paradise Country**, **TopGolf Gold Coast**, **Australian Outback Spectacular** and **Sea World Resort**.

The ad also reveals there may be some new attractions for guests to enjoy once they reopen to the public.

Village Roadshow Theme Parks, together with **Ardent Leisure**, owner of **Dreamworld**, Queensland, submitted COVID-safe plans to the Queensland Health Department for assessment in the hope they can open sooner and have more people through the gates.

Officials at **Alton Towers**, located in Staffordshire, England, have announced that the opening of the park's new ride, **Gangsta Granny: The Ride**, has been delayed until Spring 2021 due to the concerns of the novel coronavirus. The new ride will form part of The World of David Walliams attraction coming to the theme park.

Alton Towers is operated by **Merlin Entertainments Group** and incorporates a theme park, water park, spa, mini golf and hotel complex.

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Parks start to reopen nationwide

Herschend properties ease into 2020 season after shutdown

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. and BRANSON, Mo. — It was a long time coming. "Brighter days are here," said **Dolly Parton**. The legendary songstress and entertainer welcomed visitors back to her famed playground, **Dollywood**. "We have been blessed to work with some incredible experts at **Covenant Health** and with the State of Tennessee as we have navigated this extraordinary situation. Their advice and teamwork have provided untold help to make sure we are doing the right thing."

Added Dollywood President **Craig Ross**, "The team has faced this challenge head on and they have made numerous operational changes we believe will help with the safety of our guests and hosts as we continue to deal with the coronavirus. Safety is — and always will be — one of our highest priorities."

More than 6,000 signs that reinforce new safety protocols have been put in place.

Both the theme park and **Dollywood's Splash Country** opened for season pass guests on June 15 and 16. Both parks opened to the general public on June 17. This was the official kickoff to the season as after a single preview day for pass holders, the park had to shut down in March owing to the global crisis.

Planned for the spring, the park's new Flower & Food Festival has been moved to the summer months. With unprecedented conditions facing theme parks in 2020, the festival could have been understandably postponed to 2021. However, they opted to move forward, just with different months.

"This was something we were excited to offer our guests this year,"

said **Wes Ramey**, public relations manager. "Feedback from guests was that they were excited to see it, so we wanted to make it happen."

More than a dozen floral sculptures are in place that make for engaging photo ops for visitors. They include bears, playful raccoons, the park's signature butterfly motif and more.

"Dolly loves flowers," said Ramey. "She's really excited about the showcase display. It is her mom quilting the coat of many colors."

"The idea for the festival really came out of the beauty of the Smoky Mountains and Dolly's memories as a child," said **Pete Owens**, VP of marketing and public relations. "I think we are well respected with our traditional landscaping, but this is taking our landscaping to a completely different level. And then the culinary additions we have made and the large mosaic icons that have added to the park cater to a stronger guest experience."

Dollywood's sister property is the original Herschend park. **Silver Dollar City** in Branson was planning to launch its 60th anniversary season in the spring, but the festivities had to be paused. Now, the park can celebrate the milestone, even if in abbreviated fashion. Silver Dollar City opened to pass holders on June 13 and 14. All guests were admitted on June 15.

The debut of the \$25 million Mystic River Falls will take place later this summer. However, there is excitement enough to go around with the opening of Rivertown Smokehouse, a new \$4 million investment.

"Rivertown Smokehouse is a critical addition to Silver Dollar City's mas-

► See **HERSCHEND**, page 16



One of the icons of the new Flower & Food Festival is Dolly's mother quilting the coat of many colors. COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

Park officials find reopening challenging, costly and exciting



Silverwood Theme Park, Athol, Idaho, opened May 30, but attendance has been kept low due to the constant days of 50-degree weather the first part of June. The park has made a number of changes, including going completely cashless. COURTESY SILVERWOOD THEME PARK

AT: Pam Sherborne
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UNITED STATES — From installing hundreds of hand sanitizers to re-routing park guests to shutting down rides several times a day for deep cleaning, amusement park officials across the country are finding ways to navigate their openings amid the current coronavirus pandemic.

Staying within state and local guidelines and restrictions while making sure guests and employees are safe has been challenging and costly. Every aspect of a park's operation has to be considered even down to refillable souvenir cups. In some parks, that is being done with a disposal paper cup that is filled and then poured into the souvenir cup.

Hand-sanitizing stations have been added by the hundreds. In fact, **Jordan Carter**, director of marketing, **Silverwood Theme Park**, Athol, Idaho, said his park did install 100.

Park officials have added cleaning teams. **Christin King**, marketing, promotions and communications manager, **Frontier City**, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, said her park has multiple roaming Six Flags Clean Teams that disinfect handrails and other touch points regularly.

Alabama Adventure, Bessemer, Alabama, which opened May 30, has employees with backpack sanitizers continually cleaning the park. Alabama Adventure was operating at 50 percent capacity in mid-June, but, like so many other businesses, was excited about bringing guests back into the park.

Adam Leishman, park spokes-

man, **Lagoon Park**, Farmington, Utah, said his park, which opened May 22, was operating at 15 percent capacity in mid-June, which translates to a max of 6,000 guests over its 200 acres.

"But, we are just so grateful to be open," Leishman said.

Lagoon Park, with a 145-day operating season, normally would have opened at the end of March. But 2020 has been far from normal.

Like most amusement parks that have opened, Lagoon Park is on a reservation system to control capacity. Mitigating the clock has been challenging but not impossible. There is one way into the park and one way out. Guests enter at designated times and employees count them when they leave.

"That way we can open up reservations as the day goes on," Leishman said.

Employees are doing increased sanitation throughout the day and each ride is shut down several times a day for a deep clean. They are encouraging social distancing by increased signage. All guests must have a mask before entering the park but they aren't required to wear it. All employees, however, are required to do so.

"The first days we were open, our attendance was low," Leishman said. "We sort of looked at each and said, 'uhmm.'"

But that has changed now. Guests slowly began arriving and, by the second week of June, they had hit their max several times.

"We are getting very positive feedbacks," he said. "It is a different experience for guests and some are enjoying the short lines for rides. We are all just

► See **REOPENINGS**, page 16

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Playful raccoons (above left) and other animals make for engaging topiaries during the festival. The Rivertown Smokehouse (above middle) is a \$4 million addition to Silver Dollar City. Sam Hedrick, director of food & beverage at Silver Dollar City, presents new smoked and fire-grilled BBQ along with made-from-scratch sides. COURTESY DOLLYWOOD, SILVER DOLLAR CITY

►HERSCHEND

Continued from page 14

ter plan," said Park President Brad Thomas. "We needed more dining spaces, and this new restaurant (when set for normal operation) adds 400 seats to our park dining. AND all of these seats overlook Mystic River Falls. In addition, we needed a major feeder in this area of the park that can efficiently serve large numbers of guests."

Rivertown Smokehouse replaces Riverside Ribhouse, a smaller venue that existed

in the area. The park's cuisine has been found in high regard with both loyal guests and experienced park fans. Silver Dollar City has been a long-running top five finalist in the Golden Ticket Awards, as has sister park Dollywood. The new dining venue is an anchor to the reimagined area, as will be Mystic River Falls. The restaurant will provide fantastic visuals to those dining on the outside deck overlooking the new water attraction.

Throughout the decades, Silver Dollar City has become widely known for open cooking

spaces, which includes cooking demonstrations. Guests have long seen fantastic, intoxicating dishes prepared in giant skillets. The new kitchen at Rivertown Smokehouse is fully open for guests to see the food prepared.

"Every good BBQ outlet should be known for their smoked meat, but also their side dishes — and this restaurant does that," said Thomas. "The meats are packed with flavor, and the sides ... well, I will tell you the BBQ beans and baked mac and cheese are off the chart, as well as the roasted Brussels sprouts and the

healthier salad choices."

In addition to Rivertown Smokehouse, the park has also opened the new Cinnamon Bread Bakery.

"The Smokehouse isn't a stand-alone kind of location — it's in the midst of this newly themed area called Rivertown," Thomas told *Amusement Today*. "As guests walk through the streets of Rivertown, they will hear the screams, laughter and roaring river of Mystic River Falls. Plus, they will smell the slow smoking meat at the Smokehouse, plus the

aromas of fresh baking cinnamon bread from our all-new Cinnamon Bread Bakery location. Add to all of that the sounds of live music coming from the Dockside Theater, this corner of The City will be exciting and alive."

After two days of previews on June 15 and 16, **White Water** opened to all guests on June 17. The Branson water park celebrates its 40th anniversary this season. (See *AT*, June 2020.)

New safety protocols are clearly stated in videos on both dollywood.com and silverdollarcity.com.

►REOPENINGS

Continued from page 14

trying to stay positive."

Wearing face coverings is required at Frontier City for both employees and guests.

"Guests without a mask are simply asked to put their mask back on," King said. "If a guest misplaces their mask, our retail shops offer replacements."

However, King said they realize wearing a mask for long periods can be an adjustment, so they have created Mask Free Zones throughout the park where guests and members of their party can remove their masks for a short period of time.

Frontier City, which opened June 5, are under a reservation system that has been going well.

"All our restaurants now have mobile ordering that guests can take advantage of with the Six Flags app," King said. "We strongly encourage social distancing."

"We are just thrilled to welcome guests back to the park," she said.

Molly Vincent, Adventureland Park, Altoona, Iowa, said that park opened June 3.

"We began our season at 50 percent capacity, however the State of Iowa lifted capacity restrictions on June 12," Vincent said.

Park officials ramped up safety practices with more cleaning, sanitizing and spacing out tables and chairs to encourage social distancing. Employees are being screened daily. Wearing a mask is not a requirement for employees or guests.

"Many of the things we have implemented are similar to what people have been used to seeing now for several months in grocery stores and similar (signage, line queuing marks), so it is somewhat second nature now," Vincent said. "Guests have been very courteous and patient as we reopen."

Silverwood Theme Park, opened May 30.

"Things have been going pretty well except for the weather," said Jordan Carter, director of marketing. "We have had more days of 50-degree weather in

Safety for guests and employees is on top of the list at Frontier City, which opened its gates to guests on June 5. COURTESY FRONTIER CITY



June than not. But, on the positive side, it has allowed us to get our feet under us with all the changes."

Silverwood has implemented its own online reservation system to help limit guest capacity even though Idaho is in phase four of reopening. Two different priced tickets are being offered online. The least expensive ticket is nonrefundable and doesn't allow for changes to be made to the dates and times. For \$10 more, tickets buyers are allowed to make changes if needed.

Park officials are encouraging online sales, but they are allowing walk-up sales. However, walk-up ticket buyers will pay a premium. Those tickets cost \$20 more than the base price.

"We have gone completely cashless in the park, have added plexiglass around just about every cash register and are using HEPA filters in all indoor areas," Carter said.

He said that park directors began in April meeting weekly and tossing ideas around for what they would need to do when they did reopen.

"We even had our cast member training online," Carter said. "So, it has been interesting. And some of these ideas probably will remain. Will we continue to be cashless? Yes. Will we continue to use the reservation system? Yes. So some good has come out of some tight windows."



Reopening has been challenging and costly, but officials at Lagoon Park (above) are grateful just to be open. Adventureland (below) has added all the basic safety precautions, and guests have been very courteous and just glad to be at the park.

COURTESY LAGOON PARK, ADVENTURELAND



Arizona Boardwalk forges rich path to family fun in the desert

Metro Phoenix center has new name, offers lively attractions mix

AT: Dean Lamanna
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SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Building, maintaining and growing a major regional attraction requires a rarefied level of passion, commitment and vision. The team behind **Arizona Boardwalk**, a 35-acre entertainment center located just east of Phoenix in the **Talking Stick Entertainment District** of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, has, after seven years of operation and expansion, achieved that benchmark.

"We're constantly learning and making sure that we have this balance between what we want to create and what our employees and guests want, and always making sure that we're listening and reacting to feedback," said **Ran Knishinsky**, managing partner and chief marketing officer, in a chat with *Amusement Today*. "At the same time, we're at the cutting edge and bringing new experiences."

The destination is anchored by the 2016-opened **OdySea Aquarium**, a first-class, \$100-million-plus marine life facility billed as the largest of its type in the southwestern U.S., and **Butterfly Wonderland**, an interactive, rainforest-like atrium habitat for exotic varieties of the winged insect that was the site's very first attraction in 2013.

Along with these major wildlife draws, Arizona Boardwalk attractions that resumed operation May 21 accompanied by physical distancing markers, capacity limits and enhanced safety and cleaning protocols were **Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition**, **Laser + Mirror Maze**, the Instagram-friendly illusion and selfie pop-up **Surprise Your Eyes**, and the 12,000-square-foot **Pangea Land of the Dinosaurs**, a themed edutainment space populated with animatronic prehistoric beasts. Two other attractions, **VR Xtreme**, a virtual reality experience venue, and **Polar Play Ice Bar**, an indoor ice playground maintained at 23 degrees Fahrenheit, remain closed until further notice.

"We're very serious about the operations and the processes we've enacted here," said Knishinsky, noting that coronavirus mitigation measures include the installation of protective barriers at all cash registers, required temperature



Arizona Boardwalk is an architecturally striking, two-story family entertainment center built around a vibrant courtyard. The complex is anchored by **OdySea Aquarium**, which debuted in 2016, and the flagship attractions and **Laser + Mirror Maze** (above right) and **Butterfly Wonderland**, both, opened in 2013. COURTESY ARIZONA BOARDWALK

checks and mask-wearing for employees, and the placement of additional hand-sanitizing stations. (Amid a newsmaking COVID-19 caseload spike in Arizona, the City of Scottsdale mandated that everyone age six and up, with some exceptions, wear face coverings in most public areas starting June 19.)

Among the dining and fun-food outlets that have returned to service at the center are **Johnny Rockets**, **Nékker Juice Bar**, **Pangea Dino Grill**, **Pizza Time**, **Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory** and **Frozen Penguin Ice Cream**, which creates custom ice cream sandwiches. Other tenants, such as **Arizona Territory Trading Post** and **Vitality Oxygen Bar & Aqua Massage**, also have reopened.

Arizona Boardwalk welcomed more than 1.5 million visitors in 2019. Knishinsky credits the center's success to its employees and a diverse mix of offerings designed to encourage guests to spend an entire day, as well as his team's ongoing analysis of the operation's effectiveness — and its ability to remain flexible and make changes as needed.

"Some of these attractions live onsite for one, two years at a time," he said of the center's exhibit- and pop-up-style diversions, such as **Titanic** and **Surprise Your Eyes**, which have cross-generational appeal and typically run only three to six

months elsewhere in the market. "They do quite well for us structured that way because when we look at our guest traffic flow, we've found that we have very different types of guests throughout the year. For example, it's predominantly locals during the summer, and in the winter, we've got people from out of town."

The biggest recent non-pandemic-related adjustment made by the center took place in February, when it announced a rebranding from **OdySea in the Desert**, which simply expanded on the aquarium's moniker, to **Arizona Boardwalk**.

"Visitors were confused, and at the end of the day, they just assumed all we were was an aquarium," Knishinsky admitted. "We had to work really hard to make sure people understood what was here, but we didn't make a strong enough impact — and that was the impetus for the name change. We settled on 'Arizona Boardwalk' because a boardwalk is where you can eat, relax, shop and play. And it seemed a very fitting theme for the entertainment destination that we are."

Knishinsky said the percentage of pre-pandemic business that has returned has varied. "There hasn't been any real rhyme or reason to our daily traffic patterns. We can see as low as 40 percent of last year's traffic on



some days to as high as 80 percent on other days. Sometimes we ourselves are surprised at how much traffic will show up on any given day. A lot of that has to do with not only where we are with respect to COVID-19 and its potential treatment and the antibody testing, but also what's happening with the rate of infection in Arizona."

Still, he added, Arizona Boardwalk is moving ahead with plans for a **Ripley's Believe It or Not** attraction and a 155-room **Hyatt** hotel, which is in the design and development stage. And it is in negotiations to lease an additional 50 acres directly north of the existing entertainment center. "Companies are reaching out to us from all over the world about this land with different types of ideas — entertainment and otherwise," said Knishinsky, extending an invitation to the industry to submit attraction ideas and concepts for Arizona Boardwalk and its future expansion to him directly.

Knishinsky added that he's "exhilarated" that the center has fueled a boom in other new attractions within the Talking Stick Entertainment District, including **Great Wolf Lodge Arizona**, **iFly Indoor Skydiving**, **Medieval Times** and **TopGolf**.

"There was proof of concept in our success and the fact that

we could bring people from all over the state and nation to this location. As a result, a number of companies have chosen to locate here. We've supported each other, and we have cross-functional marketing meetings monthly."

The realization of Arizona Boardwalk — thus far representing an approximate total investment of \$175 million — is a dream come true for Knishinsky's uncle, **Amran Knishinsky**, PhD, an immigrant from Israel who resettled in the Phoenix area and founded (and serves as CEO) of **Butterfly Wonderland**, **OdySea Aquarium** and the complex they now anchor. Amran was also part of the development and management team behind **Newport Aquarium** in Kentucky and **OdySea Experience at Mohegan Sun** casino resort in Uncasville, Connecticut.

Ran Knishinsky, who was also raised and schooled locally and, like his uncle, rose to considerable heights in business management and consulting at the national level before bringing his expertise to attractions, indicated that community commitment and legacy building are paramount to his family.

"We are fueled by the desire to touch people's lives in a way that's positive and create family bonding time through experiences. We also obviously care about animals and our place in the ecosystem. If we can create these wonderful experiences and introduce people to the world in which we and animals live, then we feel like we're playing a very important part."

Bringing delight to guests' faces, he added, makes it all worthwhile.

"We've made our fair share of mistakes, but thankfully, we also have a number of successes under our belt. The journey has been absolutely fantastic, and I wouldn't trade it for the world."

•azboardwalk.com



The fun at Arizona Boardwalk includes **Pangea Land of the Dinosaurs**, featuring animatronic prehistoric beasts, and **Surprise Your Eyes**, an Instagram-friendly pop-up selfie exhibit. COURTESY ARIZONA BOARDWALK



COURTESY FUNPLEX

Unique Myrtle Beach Funplex location opening Spring 2021

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — The **Lahn** family, owners of The **Funplex Amusement Centers** of East Hanover and Mount Laurel, N.J., announced plans to build a new outdoor amusement park, **The Funplex Myrtle Beach**.

Expected to open in Spring 2021, the park is just a few steps from the beach and is designed for families and thrill seekers alike. The new tropical themed park will be lined with palm trees, feature seven rides, a walk-up bar and restaurant, and hours of family entertainment.

"We are excited to bring the Funplex brand of fun to Myrtle Beach. We opened our first location in Mount Laurel, N.J. 23 years ago and have developed our parks in a thoughtful and deliberate way since," said Funplex CEO **Brian Williams**. "The Funplex Myrtle Beach will offer a big punch in a compact footprint. Families can stay for a few hours and really keep busy."

Surrounding the park will be the Fun in the Sun roller coaster, the largest **Visa Big Air Coaster** in North America. Contained within the bordering tracks of the coaster will be the uniquely-themed Up And Overboard from **SBF** as well as Mach Fun, an interactive 360-degree Tower Plane ride from Visa standing more than 50 feet.

"The Visa Tower Plane is very unique in that the rider controls their experience," said **Len Soled of Rides 4 U** who represents Visa and SBF in the U.S. "The rider uses a lever to control their orientation and a push button to adjust the ride vehicle's height. It's a unique experience with every ride."

In addition, the park will also feature an SBF 65-foot Drop and Twist tower ride and a mini Reverse Time. A newly designed Umbrella Kiddie Swing, and a Tea Cup ride, both from Visa round out the forthcoming ride lineup.

"All of the attractions will be utilizing a custom-designed LED lighting package that will allow the attraction lights to run in synchronization with them music in the park," added Soled.

The Funplex bar and restaurant will feature signature food and drink options just steps from the beach.

"We have been fortunate to provide families a place to eat, ride, splash and play for years and we are thrilled to open another location for families to make memories," said **Randy Lahn**, owner of the Funplex Amusement Centers. "Myrtle Beach has been on our radar for years and I'm happy see it come to fruition."

—John W.C. Robinson

Craig's Cruisers coaster comes in



SILVER LAKE, Mich. — The first Visa Big Air Coaster in North America was delivered in mid-June by Rides 4 U to Craig's Cruisers at their Silver Lake, Michigan location. The unique coaster has four spinning cars and a 360-degree "Hamster Wheel" lead car. All Craig's Cruisers locations have been operating since June 11. COURTESY CRAIG'S CRUISERS



FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson

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Ohio's Butler County Board of Zoning has voted unanimously to oppose the major expansion of the **Land of Illusions** in Madison Township, Ohio. The board of zoning voted against the expansion 4-0.

Land of Illusions started in 1997 with just a haunted trail. Additions of the Halloween Haunt Scream Park, the Aqua Adventures Water Park and the Christmas Glow event turned it into a reoccurring destination.

The park announced expansion plans in February to become a year-round attraction.

The plan envisioned a 200-room hotel with indoor and outdoor water parks, a campground with 140 hook-ups and 40 cabins and an indoor entertainment center with arcade games, bowling and laser tag.

"We always try to be a little more affordable and enhance the guest experience," Park Operations Manager **Mike McKnight** said.

As Illinois moves to Phase Four of its COVID-19 recuperation of its reopening plan, **Space Golf** has employed a robot to help serve customers and reduce direct person-to-person contact.

The three-foot-tall, remote-controlled character, known as L-10, fits right in at the science fiction-themed family entertainment center. In addition to bringing guests their pizza, ice cream and drinks in the Sci-fi Cafe dining room, L-10 will be sweeping on the blacklight mini golf course and checking on golfers.

Ray Radelia, Space Golf's designer and builder says that the little robot is just one of the steps being taken, as the fun center prepares to reopen: "We've installed plastic panels at all employee/guest interaction points and developed intense cleaning and sanitizing schedules for the lobby, restrooms, kitchen, golf course, arcade and virtual reality ride. Of course, we have touchless hand sanitizing stations throughout."

Space Golf is moving to an online reservation system and for now, the golf course capacity will be twenty-five percent.

AAMA vice-president **Peter Gustafson** has written an open letter to U.S. politicians pointing out that across the country restaurants, retail stores, salons and even state-sponsored gaming devices are being allowed to reopen, but many family entertainment centers and arcades are not.

"Knowing the diligent work being done to ensure a safe and healthy environment for the playing public by our industry's owner/operator community, we find these continued restrictions on amusement games to be overly onerous on us, and inconsistent with other, similar consumer interaction devices and venues," Gustafson said in his letter.

He continued, "As an industry, we understand how vitality important it is that when we reopen, we do so in as safe and responsible a way as possible. We're not

asking for any special favors and agree to do all we can to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We're asking to be treated in a similar manner as other businesses so we can start the process of getting our community, industry and country back on their feet again."

Family Entertainment Center chain **Scene75** reopened the first of its facilities on June 19 when its Columbus, Ohio, location welcomed guests again for the first time since mid-March.

In a special gesture towards its guests, Scene75 announced a new, unique program would begin with the reopening. For \$29, guests can purchase a Scene75 Gold Membership Card that will grant them \$10 in free play every day they opt to visit a Scene75 location for an entire year. Scene75 locations are typically open five days per week.

"In trying to think of a way to make our brand more meaningful to [our guests], I wanted to introduce a really special offering to help all of us push through a year that continues to challenge us as humans," said **Jonah Sandler**, Scene75's founder and CEO.

To meet the physical space needs of the new **Urban Air Adventure Park** in Trexlertown, Pennsylvania, the **Iron Hill Company** performed a roof raising event on June 17.

Cedar Realty Trust conducted the massive 60,000-square-foot roof raising in collaboration with Urban Air and Iron Hill Company, adding vertical space that will enable the amusement park to function. A rare and complicated construction technique, the roof raising marks the culmination of months of preparation put in by Cedar and Iron Hill to secure the necessary approvals for the job.

The roof raising took a total of eight hours and lifted the entire 60,000-square-foot roof by eight feet. The general public was encouraged to come out and view the raising, with refreshments being provided. All who attended were encouraged to continue to observe proper social distancing protocols.

Dave & Buster's revenues tumbled by more than 50% in the first quarter of 2020, the company revealed.

"In response to these unprecedented challenges, our leadership team acted thoughtfully and decisively," said CEO **Brian Jenkins**. "First, we focused on extending the company's liquidity horizon through aggressive cash conservation efforts and securing new equity capital. We then turned our attention to safely reopening stores."

Greatly affected by the COVID-19 shutdown, revenues totalled \$159.8m compared with \$363.6M previously. There was a net loss of \$43.5M and the EBITDA loss was \$26.1M compared with +\$88.9M for the same period of last year.

Maryland State Fairgrounds remains environmentally proactive

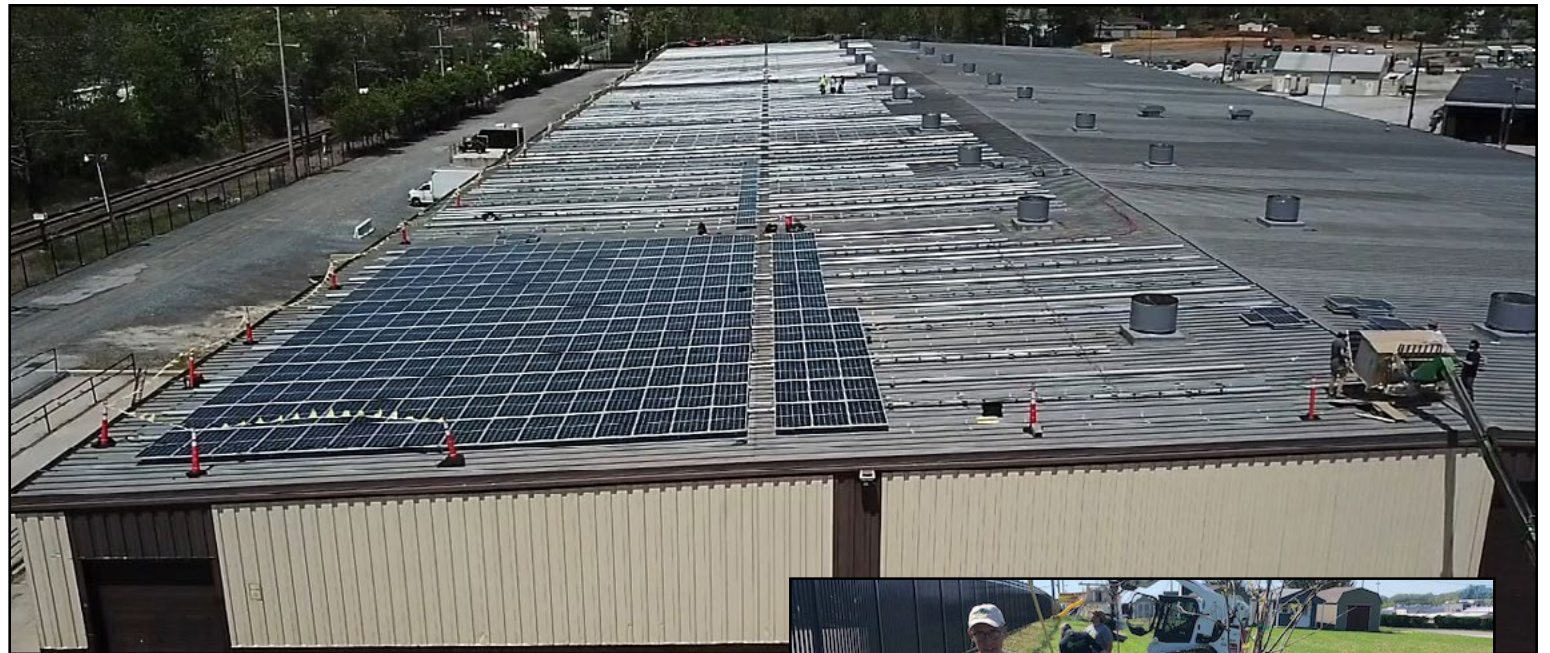
AT: B. Derek Shaw
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TIMONIUM, Md.—Recently the **Maryland State Fairgrounds** was involved in a pair of projects designed to make the grounds more environmentally friendly, in the air and on the roof.

The **Maryland State Fair & Agricultural Society, Inc.**'s environmental initiative to go solar is well underway with the recent installation of more than 7,000 solar panels. The two buildings to receive the redo were the Cow Palace and the Sheep, Swine and Goat Barn.

"Our Maryland State Fair & Agricultural Society board of directors and management team are pleased with our selection of local company **SolarGaines**," said Chairman of the Board **Gerry Brewster**, in a released statement. "Installation of over 7,000 solar panels on previously unutilized roof space will have enormous environmental, educational and financial benefits."

General Manager **Andy Cashman** said, "The partnership with SolarGaines will include the installation of a weather station to capture temperature, irradiance, humidity, precipitation, pressure and wind." Cashman added that the monitoring display and kiosk software, which promotes the fairgrounds' adoption of solar energy, "will help educate the public on how to reduce their carbon footprint,



Solar panel installation (above) was completed on the Cow Palace at the Maryland State Fairgrounds. The Sheep, Swine and Goat Barn will also receive the solar panel upgrade. Freshly planted trees were added along the eastern perimeter of the fairgrounds.

COURTESY SOLARGAINES, GERRY BREWSTER/MARYLAND STATE FAIR & AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

which aligns with the educational mission of the Maryland State Fair & Agricultural Society."

Going on concurrently, thanks to the Baltimore County Tree Planting Program, 45 new trees were planted on the fairgrounds at no cost to the 501(c)(3) nonprofit operating organization.

"These new trees are both environmentally beneficial and aesthetically pleasing," said Maryland State Fair President

Donna Myers. "It is another example of the commitment of Baltimore County and the Maryland State Fairgrounds Board and staff to environmental stewardship."

Brewster said, "In addition to better reflecting Maryland's agricultural and rural roots, the trees will provide shade, cool the environment, generate oxygen, reduce CO2 levels, absorb stormwater runoff, pro-



vide nesting opportunities for birds, squirrels, and the like, and absorb sound for the benefit of the surrounding community."

"This was the largest tree planting initiative in generations at the Maryland State Fairgrounds, utilizing trees native to Maryland," said

Cashman. "We will continue to strive to make the Maryland State Fairgrounds the best it can possibly be for our two million annual visitors, neighboring communities, elected officials and the citizens of Maryland."

•marylandstatefair.com

Carnivals, concessionaires and fairgrounds continuing to serve

Throughout the month of June, food trailers were still appearing all over the country in various spots to provide some income while providing food and refreshment to those who want to experience fair/carnival food while supporting vendors.

The Alameda County Fairgrounds, Pleasanton, California, has a contactless setup that includes a food pick-up place, along with a separate beer and wine location during their Fair Food Friday's. People visiting the Alameda County Fairgrounds can make use of the "selfie-spot" provided by the fair so visitors can immortalize this unique experience while practicing social distancing. The cow shown (immediate right) is part of a herd of four on property. This one is Golden State Warrior themed.

The grounds recently added Pop Up Drive-In Movies each Friday. The cost is \$25 per vehicle with online advance purchase or \$30 per vehicle the evening of the movie.

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MIDWAYSCENE

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As many food concessionaires are setting up throughout the country, there has been no food finder tool, until now. **NICA (National Independent Concessionaires Association)** with a partnership between **First Data, Saffire** and **Carnival Eats**, recently created a vendor-generated database of locations that can connect with people who are trying to find fair food in their local area.

The #NICAFairFoodFinder is gathering information to populate that site. They are inviting interested concessionaires to sign up at nicafairfoodfinder.com. Once listings are online, visitors to the site can search by zip code, desired food categories and more.

The three-day **Commerce Days Festival** in Commerce, Oklahoma, is the first known amusement industry event with a carnival to open to the public. Over the Memorial Day weekend, the ninth annual edition took place with **Great Plains Amusements**, based over 250 miles away in Rush Springs, Oklahoma, as the midway provider.

Precautions were put in place to ensure the safety of the community. Fairgoers were asked to bring their own chairs and socially distance from other groups when sitting to enjoy food or live music, in lieu of bleacher and communal seating. Rides were filled at half capacity for social distancing and hand sanitizer was available along with stand-alone hand washing stations. It was reported that attendance figures were double the amount from last year.

Deggeller Attractions recently signed a 10-year contract extension with the board of the **Clay County Agricultural Fair**, Green Cove Springs, Florida. Deggeller, based in Stuart, Florida, has been the midway provider since inception in 1987.

"We are ecstatic to continue our longstanding relationship with Deggeller Attractions. For the past 34 years, Deggeller Attractions has provided Clay County an exceptionally entertaining, clean and safe family experience. Beyond just a business relationship, we truly regard the Deggeller's and their team as part of the Clay County Fair family. Deggeller Attractions ongoing commitment to quality, safety and innovation, added to the close relationship with

our fair's management team, makes for a great partnership and I am excited to welcome them back in 2021," said **Tasha Hyder**, Clay County Fair Manager, on their facebook page.

In lieu of the April fair this year, a virtual one took place through their Facebook page. It included a virtual talent show featuring home-made videos from entertainers that were scheduled. Food vendors also submitted videos of fair foods and some even offered educational "how to" videos for making fair treats from home. The 2021 edition returns April 1-10.

The fairgrounds of the **Alaska State Fair**, Palmer, are the new home for drive-in movies these days. In participation with **Showboss AV and Event Management** and the **United Way**, the **Pop-Up Drive In Movies at The Fair** has quickly become a popular event, since its mid-May start. Two different movies are shown each Friday and Saturday evening on a 23-foot-wide and 13-foot-tall LED screen. Admission is \$25 per carload. Reservations must be made online.

In mid-May, the late August fair cancelled for this year — the first time since World War II. The fair will be back Aug. 26-Sept. 6, 2021, with midway by **Golden Wheel Amusements**.

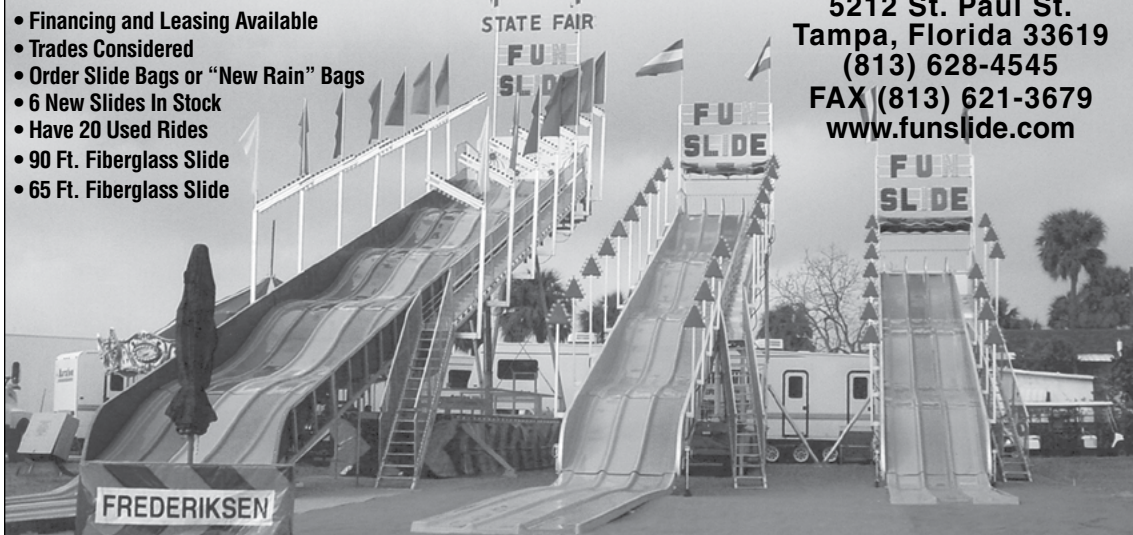
Gary Chubb, former senior director of maintenance at **Hersheypark**, recently announced the formation of **GC Amusement Consulting, LLC**, to serve the amusement industry.

With almost 50 years' experience in the amusement business, Chubb is available to assist in a number of industry-related areas. His experience includes, but is not limited to, permanent amusement park, traveling show, water park, family entertainment center, trampoline park and amusement industry-related ride inspections, operations inspections, safety inspections, standard practice reviews, ride maintenance reviews, grounds and facility inspections and providing defense litigation support and consulting.

"I have always respected a number of industry veterans that opened their own consulting businesses — industry greats like **Harold Hudson, Jerry Aldrich, Pat Hoffman** and many more," said Chubb. "I figured, why not, I'll give it a shot and see how things work out. Besides, I have to do something to keep myself busy."

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Fairs nationwide cancel 2020 events, Kentucky adjusts for show to go on

UNITED STATES — Many county, state and independent fairs and rodeos across North America have been cancelling their upcoming events. Closures have surpassed 360 fairs according to the **International Association of Fairs and Expositions**. (This includes member and non-member fairs.) Here's a sample of some of the ones that will not take place as well as ones with modifications.

The 170th edition of the **Wisconsin State Fair** will not occur in 2020, yet another victim to COVID-19. The closure was done on behalf of the safety of all fairgoers, staff, vendors, entertainers, exhibitors, sponsors, suppliers and other parties integral to the fair. Due to evidence that the virus spreads easily and quickly when people are gathered in densely populated areas led numerous agencies to continue their recommendation to avoid mass gatherings. The 11-day fair fit into that category.

"We couldn't find a way to basically have every good feature of the fair, and yeah, putting together a diminished product was not something we wanted to do," said **John Yingling**, chairman of the board, in a story with **WDJT, CBS 58**. The fair feels it will take a four million dollar hit in lost revenue. The last time the Wisconsin State Fair was canceled was during World War II in 1945. The fair, with its independent ride midway, comes back August 5-15, 2021.

The 150-year-old **Tennessee State Fair** will not take place this September 11-20. "We're just doing what we believe is in the best interest of the health and well-being of those who walk through our gates each year," said General Manager **Scott Jones** on the event's website. "The more we talked with local and state officials, gathered information from those involved with other similar events, and discussed the topic thoroughly within our own board, we came to the conclusion that it would be best this year to not host a traditional state fair."

Another challenge this year would be to fit in the fair in a reduced footprint while following health protocols. A new MLS stadium is under construction providing concern about being able to meet the restrictions and preventive recommendations associated with COVID-19 as expressed by healthcare officials.

Jones and his staff are developing plans to offer a number of activities during the 10-day period the fair would have been held. Some ideas being considered include contests, exhibits, the presence of certain carnival-like vendors and virtual and/or digital events. This is the first time since WWII, that the state has not held a fair. The 2021 dates are September 10-19 with **NAME** slated to be the ride concessionaire.

A pair of state fairs in The Prairie State — Springfield and DuQuoin, Ill. — will not operate this year. The decision was made by state officials because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. **Governor JB Pritzker** issued an Executive Order cancelling the **Illinois State Fair** and the **DuQuoin State Fair**. Pritzker called it "the right choice based on guidance from the **Illinois Department of Public Health** and other experts: We have to prioritize keeping our people safe," he said in a statement on the Illinois.gov website. Both fairs are run by Illinois state government.

"We've said from the very beginning our main concern is the health and safety of those who attend our state fairs," said **Jerry Costello II**, **Illinois Department of Agriculture**, acting director. "These aren't just fairs; they are economic engines for the Springfield and DuQuoin communities that highlight the best that Illinois has to offer and shine a spotlight on kids around our state. These kids work

all year to prepare for their livestock and projects, so we are determined to still provide them an event that showcases their hard work and perseverance through a very difficult year."

That event is a junior livestock expo the **Illinois Department of Agriculture** is hosting in Springfield this September. The expo is for Illinois exhibitors ages 8-21 to show their animals. The **4-H** general project show will take place virtually, with premiums and ribbons to be distributed by the agriculture department.

Both fairs attracted more than 600,000 visitors combined last year. Some estimate the lost economic activity from the cancellation of the Illinois State Fair could be north of \$80 million for the Springfield area due to lost hotel reservations and restaurant visits. The total estimated economic loss in the DuQuoin area is \$6 million.

The 2021 Illinois State Fair will run from August 12-22, the 2021 DuQuoin State Fair is scheduled for August 27-September 6. **NAME** has been the Illinois State Fair ride provider in the past. The 2021 fair and beyond is currently in a bidding process. The DuQuoin State Fair will again have **Miller Spectacular Shows** providing the fun.

After months of review and discussion, the **Iowa State Fair Board** cancelled the fair due to continuing concerns about coronavirus and the financial impracticality of a socially distant fair. The decision came down to a choice between risk and reward. Should organizers offer a fair with the bare minimum, or wait until next year when all who wanted to could participate. "We tried every which way in the world to put together a plan that kept people safe and that also completed the mission of the Iowa State Fair," said **Gary Slater**, Iowa State Fair CEO in the *Des Moines Register*. But "it became a challenge to have a fair that we could all enjoy and be proud of."

With limited occupancy on the grounds recommended by medical professionals and the substantial drop in attendance suggested surveys, the 2020 fair would have been a shadow of past fairs. "Not having a fair and having a socially distant fair lost about the same amount of money," Slater said. "To have a fair that broke even, we would have had to have triple the number" of people who said in the survey that they would attend. "It was not even close to breaking even."

With the cancellation of the fair this year, it is estimated the loss for the Des Moines tourism industry may be up to a \$110 million. The independent midway fair returns August 12-22, 2021.

The **Kentucky State Fair** will go on at the Kentucky Exposition Center. **Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear** approved a plan in early June that allows the state fair to take place with modifications. There will be significantly less vendors and many things will look very different. State fair staff, vendors, judges and livestock participants will be required to wear facial coverings. The midway will have enhanced social distancing for ride, game and food queuing. The plan includes wider aisles inside buildings, reduced indoor capacity and additional hygiene stations throughout the grounds. Livestock competitions will be reduced significantly, by up to 69% according to reports.

The concert area will be expanded to 5.2 acres from the existing footprint of 1.9 acres to allow for proper social distancing. Projector screens will provide increased viewing with seating expanded from 32-inch rows to 6-foot rows and 10-foot cross aisles. This is the first of four years that **Kissel Entertainment** will provide the ride midway. The fair runs August 20-30.

—B. Derek Shaw

NAME adds new Visa Mini Breakdance to lineup



FARMLAND, Ind. — North American Midway Entertainment (NAME) took delivery of a new Visa Mini Breakdance in late June (above). The sale was brokered by Rides 4 U who exhibited the attraction during recent IAAPA Expos (right). COURTESY RIDES 4 U; AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



Mary Talley speaks out to save outdoor entertainment industry

FORT WORTH — **Mary Brown Talley**, principal with **Talley Amusements**, recently wrote an open letter regarding the reopening of the amusement industry.

Here are excerpts from the 18-paragraph message: "The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has launched the largest human experiment in world history. Here in the United States, American citizens have been forced into confinement, and our once-thriving economy has been driven to a screeching halt with tens of millions now unemployed and tens of thousands of businesses on the brink of collapse. Decades-old family companies are at or very near bankruptcy as state and local governments continue to maintain their executive orders to keep closed, what they have deemed to be 'non-essential' businesses.



Talley

"In the span of just a few short weeks, the ability to earn a livelihood in the fair and outdoor entertainment industry has completely vanished. While these measures were said to be 'temporary' in order to stop the spread of the virus, an important fact remains. These restrictions continue to remain in place and my ability to earn an income in my family-owned business has evaporated into thin air. What was once a \$4.5 billion-dollar annual industry has been completely annihilated, not by the virus, but by the misguided attempts to prevent its spread.

"Just like many of my fellow outdoor amusement industry colleagues, my company has lost millions of dollars of revenue we will never be able to recoup. The cities and towns we visit each year have lost critical revenue used to pay for parks, roads, police, fire, and EMS services. Most importantly, our friends, neighbors and fellow Americans have lost the joy and excitement that our industry provides and which has been a staple of American life for generations.

"It is now imperative that all of our voices are heard and paid attention to. In order to accomplish that, we must all — and I mean all (circuses, fairs, carnivals, our employees, and the good folks we serve) — band together and force these government decision makers in every city, county, and state to immediately put in place a plan for a phased-in reopening of our industry, just as they have already done for so many others.

"Now is the time," Talley concluded, "for all of us to set aside competitive differences and do what is right for our industry and for our country so that future generations will have the opportunity, just like we did, to continue the traditions of the outdoor entertainment industry and to create jobs, opportunities and memories."

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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► Water park reopening webinars — page 26 / WhiteWater creates new Endless Surf — page 28

Texas water park gets a jump start on the season

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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NEW CANEY, Texas — The long-delayed **Big Rivers Waterpark & Adventures**, which struggled for years to get completed and finally open to the public last year, decided it was ready to open for 2020 regardless of what the state's governor proclaimed.

CEO and developer **Monty Galland** opened the park on Memorial Day weekend appearing to defy the orders of Texas State Governor **Greg Abbott**.

At the time, pools were allowed to open, but amusement venues, splash pads and water parks were to remain closed. Galland claimed that despite having "water park" in its name, Big Rivers wasn't breaking the rules as the county in which the park is located considers the facility a "commercial pool." The park has a wave pool, lazy river, family raft slides, body slides and racing slides. It also claims to have the largest waterplay structure in Texas. Along with the interactive play elements, the waterplay structure has an additional eight slides.

Just one week later, the governor eased restrictions and allowed all water parks within the state to open.

The CDC has stated that proper sanitation at pools and water parks will likely kill the COVID-19 virus.

According to Galland, benches were separated to encourage small family and friend groupings, guests were asked to social distance and hand sanitizing stations were set up throughout the park. The chlorine in the water was increased and is being monitored closely.

Galland limited the park to 2,020 customers and opening day tickets sold for \$20.20. The 2,020 figure represents approximately 16 percent of the park's full capacity. Tickets were sold online in advance, however, that did not guarantee entry into the park and guests were advised to get there early.

Some families began to queue as early as 7 a.m., and by the time the park opened at 10:30 a.m., a long line of people had formed outside the gates. Those in the queue had to wait in the hot sun; few were practicing social distancing and very few were wearing masks. After a few hours of operation, as groups or families left the park, others were allowed to enter.

Because it was one of the few water parks to open on Memorial Day weekend, the park garnered national media attention.

The following May weekend, tickets were again sold in advance, but ticket sales reached capacity early in the day and the park even went so far as to block off the parking lot. The park's Facebook page showed there was much confusion as to what options were available to patrons who had pre-purchased tickets in hand. With access to parking closed, some ticket holders were not even given the option to wait in line to get into the park as others left. Many were told to come back during the week, which may not have been an option for some. The park will continue daily operation through August 15, then operate on weekends through September 27.

In addition to the traditional water park, Big Rivers also features a floating **Aquaglide** obstacle course on its spring-fed river. The Wild Isle obstacle course is included with the water park daily admission or with a season pass. Everyone is limited to one hour on the course per visit.

A ticket to the water park also gains admission to **Gator Bayou Adventure Park** which includes a number of dry attractions: Gator Gulch alligator encounter, Big Al's Farm petting zoo, Big Al's Fishing Hole and Mystic Forest Maze.

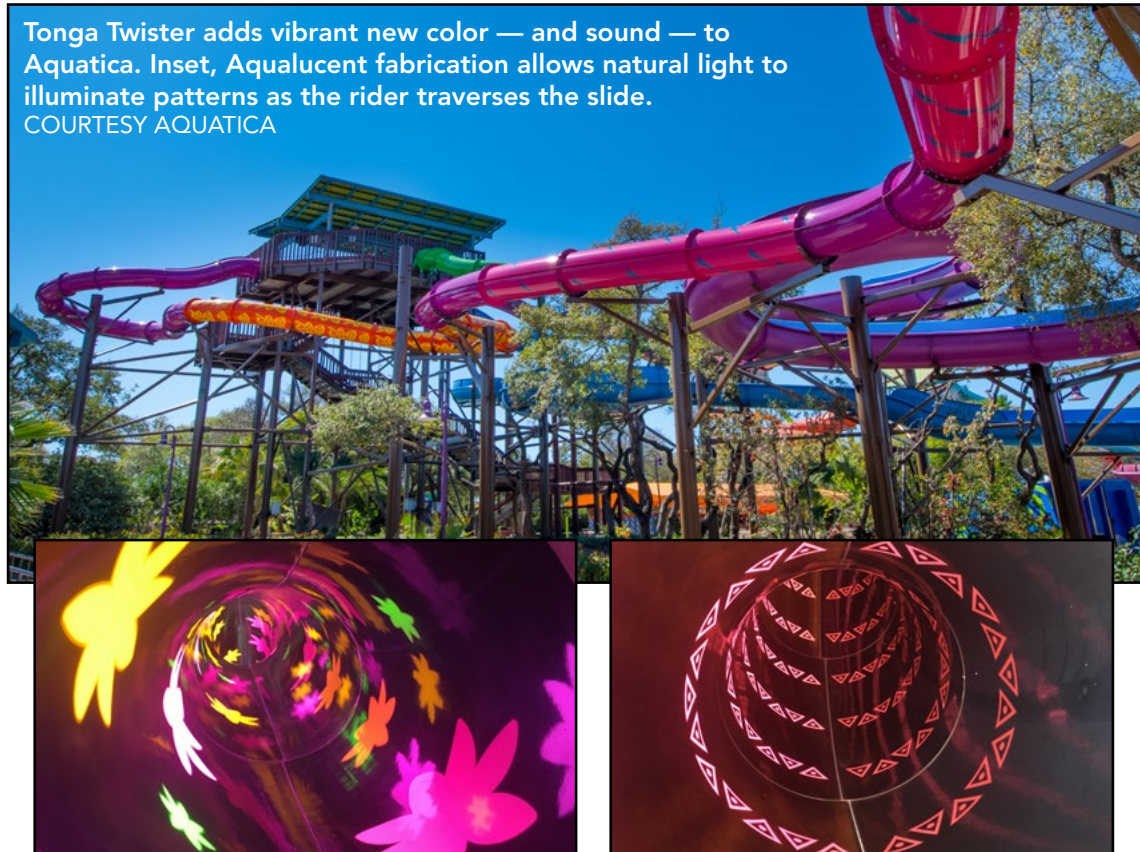
The aerial adventures part of the Gator Bayou features a ropes course, zip lines and climbing wall — all priced separately.

Big Rivers Waterpark is part of the **Grand Texas Sports and Entertainment District** that is to eventually include a theme park, sportsplex, factory outlet mall, restaurants and hotels. **The Grand Texas RV Resort, Speedsports Racing Park** and a **Valero** convenience store are already open.

WhiteWater West supplies new thriller

Tonga Twister adds heart-pounding attraction to Aquatica San Antonio

Tonga Twister adds vibrant new color — and sound — to Aquatica. Inset, Aqualucent fabrication allows natural light to illuminate patterns as the rider traverses the slide.
COURTESY AQUATICA



AT: Tim Baldwin
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SAN ANTONIO — Hot on the heels of last year's addition — Iku's Breakaway Falls by **ProSlide** — Tonga Twister is the latest crowd pleaser at **Aquatica, Sea World San Antonio's** water park. Supplied by **WhiteWater West** (Richmond, B.C.), Tonga Twister combines with the Canadian company's Taumata Racer, Aquatica's six-lane mat racer that launched in 2018, to provide visitors three new attractions in the last three years — an impressive feat for any water park.

In a bit of cruel irony, Tonga Twister made its debut less than two weeks before the COVID-19 mandated shutdown in March. Serving guests new thrills for spring break remained a tease until water parks were cleared to reopen by the governor. Aquatica renewed its season on June 6.

Tonga Twister combines new elements to standard water-slides — visual and audio. Using WhiteWater's Aqualucent technology, images and patterns are incorporated into the fabrication of the slides to allow vivid colors and graphics to accent the journey down each of the two slides. The designs are differ-

ent on both slides, which gives riders incentive to take in the natural light show each offers.

Standing more than 50 feet tall, each of the two slides stretches 415 feet. Riders finish their voyage in a splashpool.

"As we welcome guests back to Aquatica, we are excited for them to get reacquainted with our newest thrill ride," said **Lise Collins**, vice president of Aquatica San Antonio. "It's the first water ride of its kind [in San Antonio] to have two body slides, each with its own light show and high-energy music to increase the excitement and fun."

A series of speakers positioned along the slides allow riders to enjoy the pulsating music throughout the ride.

"The music combined with the lighting effects give the ride a fun and vibrant club-like feel," said Collins. "Well known, popular songs of all genres performed by some of today's hottest musicians are piped into the slides. Riders will definitely recognize these songs."

Riders must be 48 inches tall to participate in the body slide.

"For the past five years, we have been developing our Aqualucent technology, creating exciting new shapes and patterns

that add bursts of light and color to our water slides," said **Emily Colombo**, VP of strategic partnerships, WhiteWater West. "For SeaWorld, our in-house manufacturing specialists, architects, and engineers collaborated with their team to create eight new patterns, using six colors and over 20 unique shapes. The process was extremely exciting for all of us, and everyone stepped up to the challenge to create something simple, low maintenance and yet truly spectacular."

In making an effective use of space, Aquatica retired two slides off an older four-slide complex for the dynamic new additions. By using the existing tower and catch pool, the emphasis on the new project could be focused on the multi-sensory aspects of Tonga Twister. The configuration of the new slides is completely original to what stood previously.

Tonga Twister diversifies Aquatica's lineup. Family and children's slides are on offer, but for the more adventurous, the park's portfolio now includes the experience of Tonga Twister, trap door slides, negative-G wave fall slides, racing lanes and family rafts that enter an underground grotto encountering face-to-fin views of stingrays.

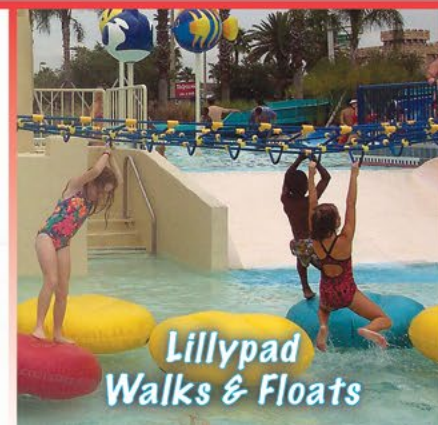


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Whitewater West webinar helping to navigate water park openings

AT: Pam Sherborne
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VANCOUVER, B.C. — A panel of water park industry professionals all agreed that the novel coronavirus pandemic has and is changing just about everything in the industry. As water park operators and owners begin preparing and opening for the 2020 season, those changes will be challenging.

"With the cash flow and the stay-at-home orders, it just kind of changes how we do everything," said **Jody Kneupper**, park president at **Wild Waves and Premier Parks**, Seattle, Washington. "And it starts at the beginning with hiring."

WhiteWater West Industries hosted a webinar in late May, along with a panel of water park industry professionals, to try to help water park owners and operators navigate their ways into opening for the 2020 season.

Franceen Gonzales, regional vice president at **WhiteWater**, headquartered in Vancouver, British Columbia, led the panel that included, besides Kneupper, **Aaron Mendelson**,



director of customer success and product innovation at **Vantage** and **David Bromilow**, director, parks and attractions, **Mobaro**.



Gonzales

From doing Zoom interviews in hiring to determining park and pool capacities and densities to cleaning tubes, mats and ropes courses, the discussion ran longer than an hour with more issues still out there.

There seem to be challenges at every corner. Water parks, like other attractions, have a tight window in which to ramp up and open. One of the problems Kneupper discussed was getting the tim-

ing correct. Once a park is allowed to open, an inspection date has to be set up with the health department and "they are busy, too."

"Once we can do that, then we will have to see what we can pull together and what we can afford to pull together," he said.

That tight window will require lots of funding.

They all agreed during that webinar there is no playbook. States are reopening on different time tables and in different ways. Park officials will have to be their own pathfinders.

Mendelson discussed the

Vantage platform that has the capabilities of determining in-park density and real-time attendance. Since many ride operators cannot see the end of queue lines, the Vantage program can virtually assess the situation. It also can help to encourage guests to disperse and visit less populated attractions to better manage guest density. This is done with an RFID wristband.

"When guests come in, we scan them," Mendelson said. "As they leave, we scan them out. We know exactly how many people are in the park in real time."

The program can be changed as capacity limits are increased.

Bromilow discussed how Mobaro can give operators the ability to set up automated reports for sanitary cleaning. With a real-time COVID-19 dashboard, Mobaro can support owners in monitoring completed versus missing audits at different locations to create better communication across the park regarding



Mendelson

cleaning procedures.

Another important aspect of operating this season is looking at emergency procedures such as first aid and how that will be administered in ways that are safe to both employees and guests.

There was discussion about taking temperatures at the entrance gates and if they would be reliable during the summer. And, if deciding to take temperatures, what would happen if one person in a group comes in and records a fever? Do you not allow any of the group to enter or just the one person?

Communicating with employees and with guests will be tantamount this season. With little time to train employees, procedures will need to be clearly defined and discussed.

The panel agreed that this year guests will want the cleaning team to be visible. Hand sanitizers and other sanitizations will play a big part in 2020 operations.

•whitewaterwest.com



Bromilow



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NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert
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The brand-new **Soaky Mountain Waterpark** in Sevierville, Tennessee, plans to start soft opening on June 27. Season passholders and guests of **Wilderness at Smokies** lodge will get a sneak preview on June 25-26. Plans for a grand opening celebration, however, have been pushed back to 2021.

"We want to throw a big celebration to mark the opening of this fabulous water park, but for right now, we will have to wait and practice responsible social distancing and other safety precautions outlined in our Safer at Play Program," **Dave Andrews**, general manager of Soaky Mountain Waterpark, said.

Margaritaville Lake Resort in Montgomery, Texas, is bumping up its plans for reopening. Originally scheduled to open July 1, the resort will instead open in phases starting on June 26, and has been taking online and phone reservations. The state of Texas considered construction an essential business. That, along with favorable weather conditions allowed construction to finish ahead of schedule and the resort to plan a sooner-than-expected opening. The **Jimmy Buffet**-style property, northwest of Houston, features 303 suites in a 20-story luxury tower overlooking Lake Conroe, and 32 waterfront cottages. Along with 72,000 square feet of conference and event space, the resort includes a three-acre water park, five pools, 5 o'clock Somewhere swim-up pool bar, St. Somewhere Spa and an 18-hole golf course. Activities on the 22,000-acre Lake Conroe include boating, fishing, water and jet skiing, kayaking, sandy beaches, multiple marinas, nearby hiking and dinner cruises.

The owner of **Atlantic City's Showboat Hotel** has revealed plans to build a \$100 million indoor water park. The former Showboat Casino currently operates as a non-gambling destination in Atlantic City. **Bart Blatstein**, the Philadelphia developer who runs the hotel said, "Atlantic City does not have a family market. This will open up a whole new market that doesn't exist."

Atlantic City, which has been a resort town since the late 1800s, became a hotbed of gambling casinos when gaming was approved in 1976. The city's failure to diversify resulted in a decline in the new millennium with multiple casinos closing.

Blatstein is seeking approval from the **Casino Reinvestment Development Authority** for designation as an entertainment retail district. That would entitle the water park project to tax breaks on construction material as well as an annual rebate of up to \$2.5 million in sales tax. The type of sales tax rebate he is seeking has been widely used in Atlantic City. Although the proposal is the latest in a string of water park projects envisioned for Atlantic City, Blatstein said he already has assembled a team to run the project and has completed soil testing.

Construction is taking place on an existing parking lot between the Showboat and **Ocean Casino Resort** at the north end of the Atlantic City Boardwalk, an area casino and

city leaders have been trying to revitalize. Other than the location and estimated investment costs, no other details about the proposed water park have been released.

Although it seems as if the majority of water parks have been able to open or are planning to open with new restrictions in place, some fairly sizeable parks are not able to do so.

Waves Resort Corpus Christi (Texas) announced that it will remain closed for the 2020 summer season owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Stephanie Pickett**, the resort's general manager, indicated they cannot hire the 300 lifeguards that are required to operate the park.

The resort's hotel, restaurant and its 4,000-square-foot indoor gaming lounge and esports training center will also be closed to the public until May 2021.

Water World in Federal Heights, Colorado, has also indicated that the park will not operate for the 2020 season.

"We have monitored all Colorado public health orders including state, county, city and health department, and we are currently not permitted to open Water World. At this time and in direct consultation with public officials, there is no indication that an aquatic park of our size and scope, which operates with larger guest attendance, will be permitted to open within our short summer operating season," the park stated in an email.

One of the factors that went into Water World's decision to cancel the season was the fact that training seasonal staff each year takes several months, and so far no in-person training has been allowed.

Plans have been revealed for a new \$53 million (AU\$77 million) state-of-the-art aquatic and leisure center in Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia.

The ultra contemporary ring-shaped structure is designed to integrate with the parkland surroundings of Parramatta Park, minimize noise and reduce the impact on nearby residents. Contained within the ring are multiple indoor pools including a 25-meter lap pool; a 10-lane, 50-meter outdoor lap pool; a water play structure; splash pools; cafe; locker and changing rooms and plenty of open space for lounge chairs and umbrellas.

The center is being funded by the state government and the City of Parramatta. The design by **Grimshaw Architects**, **Andrew Burges Architects** and **McGregor Coxall** includes the integration of native plants and shrubs around the structure.

Architect **Andrew Burges** said of the design: "We believe that blending it into the natural park setting will really broaden the appeal of the aquatic and leisure center and make it a popular and enjoyable experience for the city's diverse and growing community."

The project is scheduled for completion in 2023. The city's last public pool was bulldozed in 2018 to make way for the new **Western Sydney Stadium** development.

Kalahari institutes numerous measures to keep guests safe

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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WISCONSIN DELLS, Wis. — **The Kalahari Resort** in Wisconsin Dells opened back up to guests on May 27, after having been closed in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The resorts in Sandusky, Ohio, and Pocono Mountains, Pennsylvania, were planning to open in June. The Round Rock, Texas, resort currently under construction is still on schedule to make its debut in November of this year.

"This time has brought unprecedented challenges, and we want to offer a safe place for families to come together and focus on the fun instead of the worry," said **Travis Nelson**, spokesperson, **Kalahari Resorts and Conventions**. "When you're ready for a getaway, Kalahari will be open with a vacation experience guests can feel good about."

The resort followed expert reopening guidance and policies from state and local authorities, including the **Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's** Reopening Guidelines. As more information becomes available, Kalahari will continue to make adjustments to support best practices for the safety and well-being of guests and associates.

The entire Kalahari team was required to complete wellness and safety training which included **OSHA** and **CDC** requirements. Temperature checks are made for every associate coming onto the property; anyone with a temperature higher than 100.4 is not permitted on the property. Resort employees are wearing masks and gloves and are asked to follow strict guidelines for handwashing.

Visual signage and text messaging are utilized to remind guests to maintain a proper physical distance staying six feet from anyone not in their group. In addition, staggered guest service desks are used, and the resort has requested that only one family member check in at the front desk. Protective screens are in place in those areas where it is necessary, such as the front desk, coffee shops, retail stores and snack shops.

The resort's sanitizing and wellness guidelines are communicated and visible to everyone at the resort. Guests may view sanitation practices through a dedicated in-room TV sanitation station and online.

Chairs and loungers are sanitized at the end of every day with hospital-grade disinfectants. Some of the chairs and loungers were removed to aid in physical distancing. All chemicals and safety protocols used in the water park meet and exceed industry standards. EPA approved hospital-grade disinfectants in high-pressure sprayers are deployed by a specialty task force team member. Continued deep-cleaning occurs on all high-touch point surfaces including faucets, trash receptacles, vending machines, elevators, buttons, keypad, luggage cars, stair handrails, gym equipment, statues and counters.

Kalahari is also encouraging guests to go cashless by placing funds on a room key, wristband or Kalahari gift card. Resort information, such as maps and coupons, that was included in a key card packet in the past will instead be transmitted via text to the guest's phone.

Restaurant occupancy will be dictated by local governance. All condiments will be single-use whenever possible. Single-use paper menus are provided at each sit-down restaurant. Mints and toothpicks have been removed. High touch areas such as pens, check presenters, order stations, chairs, highchairs and handrails are frequently sanitized with the use of hospital-grade disinfectants.

Maids no longer enter an occupied guest's room. Traditional room service is no longer offered. Guests wanting a change of linens or towels can place these items in a bag to be exchanged outside the door of the guest room. High touch items have been removed including tissue box covers, ice bucket, informational binders, coffee makers, newspapers, menus and pens.

Despite concerns over the current pandemic, Kalahari wants its guests to have confidence in their getaway at one of their resorts and to focus on family memories instead of focusing on worry.

WhiteWater supplies La Vague Grand Paris with new Endless Surf

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

SEVRAN, France — Bodysurfing on ocean waves has likely been around for as long as humans have been swimming in the ocean. Standing up on what is now commonly called a surfboard is more recent and developed as part of the Polynesian culture and became popular with Pacific Islanders. In the early 1900s, surfing made its way from the islands to the shores of California, taking off in the 1960s and 1970s. During its early history, surfing was limited to those having access to the right kind of ocean waves.

That all changed in 1969 with the opening of **Big Surf** in Tempe, Arizona. That first contemporary wave pool was able to produce waves up to five feet that could be ridden with a conventional surfboard. It allowed surfers to ride the waves, hundreds of miles from the nearest ocean.

Since that time, surfing has increased in popularity — to the point that currently more than 24 million people identify themselves as surfers. Following petitions and applications from the **International Surfing Association (ISA)**, the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** voted to include surfing competition in the 2020 Olympic Games (now postponed to 2021). The Games of the XXXII Olympiad, to be held in Tokyo, will utilize the Tsurigasaki Surfing Beach about 40 miles east of Tokyo.

For the XXXIII Olympiad, Paris does not have the luxury of a nearby coast with suitable surfing waves. A northeast commune of Paris known as Sevrans is constructing a large board-sports park that will include a double-sided wave pool when it opens in the summer of 2023.

The 250 million **La Vague Grand Paris** project is set to become a high-end entertainment venue. Included with an Endless Surf ES4800 surf pool are a skate park, family-focused aquatic amenities, a cycle track, beaches, water park, basketball courts, a music stage, and an urban boardwalk incorporating restaurants, bars, and retail facilities.

WhiteWater West of Canada has been chosen to supply the park with an ES4800 Surf Pool. Endless Surf features powerful, efficient and customizable waves. The inland wave-producing technology is backed by WhiteWater's four decades of expertise in aquatic engineering and design experience.

"WhiteWater made its first



Sevrans, France, is hoping to become a destination for those seeking to enjoy water sports in Europe. The iconic land-based surfing experience at La Vague Grand Paris will serve as the anchor to what is planned to be an epic entertainment venue just outside of Paris. COURTESY WHITEWATER WEST

surf pool, Disney's Typhoon Lagoon, in 1989. With Endless Surf, we introduce the next generation of surf pool technology. Our goal is to make the world's best man-made wave, creating an authentic surf experience that enables tens of thousands to discover the thrill of surfing for the first time," said **Geoff Chutter**, WhiteWater's CEO.

"Our reliable pneumatic technology creates endless rolling sets, designed for operational success; being flexible, high capacity, and above all else, safe," explained **Paul Chutter**, chief business development officer of WhiteWater. "Inland surfing frees surfers from the whims of Mother Nature and proximity to the coast by providing man-made surf," added Chutter.

As the name implies, the wave-generating machine can provide an endless supply of different types of waves with the flick of a switch — or more precisely — instructions from a computer. Its heart-shaped pool design is scalable in size, with a maximum width of 1,000 feet in a five-acre pool. The machine can provide waves in both directions from the center of the pool, with a wave lasting up to 26 seconds from the beginning to the end of the ride. The pool can accommodate 75 surfers at a time, with waves potentially getting pumped out every eight seconds. However, according to WhiteWater, a 10-to-12 second interval is optimal for most pools.

The wave-producing machine is accessed via a computer running patented software. Titled **Wave Doctor**, its proprietary programming gives the operator the control to change the wave pattern in real-time based on the session require-

ments and guests in the pool. **Wave Doctor's** intuitive interface lets surf pool operators create any wave desired for their operations. With the ability to run multiple wave types at one time, beginners, intermediates, and experts can surf alongside each other, providing huge operational flexibility. In just a few simple taps, operators will be able to look at the overview of their surf pool, and subsequently decide which types of waves to run and where. Operators can easily adapt to the different skill levels of riders in the pool. The technology even allows for different types of waves in different parts of the pool. For instance, operators can turn down the size and frequency of waves for intermediate surfers on one side and run fast, barreling waves for more advanced surfers at the other end of the pool. This allows everybody to surf the right waves for their skill level so that nobody gets left out, a common occurrence in surf pool operations.

Baptiste Caulonque, the creative mind behind the Paris project, is the chief operations officer of **Surf Park Holdings** and the project director of La Vague Grand Paris. A former financial and business analyst for **PricewaterhouseCoopers**, he developed the operating and financial models for the massive surf park. He also provides consulting services to assist organizations in development, finance, and business operations in the hospitality and amusement park sectors across Europe and the Americas — including two previous large-scale surf park projects. He is an avid surfer and has developed a variety of skills in the board-sports industry.



The IOC has been insistent that the Olympic surfing competition takes place in the ocean. Tokyo had hoped to use its new Surf Stadium Japan, but the IOC refused to change the venue from Tsurigasaki Beach. Instead, the Surf Stadium will serve as a venue for pre-competition warm-ups and training sessions.

Paris has already designated the beach at Teahupo'o, Tahiti, as the official site of the 2024 surfing competition. That venue, more than 9,000 miles away makes it one of the longest distances between an event and the host city at any Olympic Games in history. Although France does have plenty of beaches, at that time of year good surfing waves could be unreliable. Teahupo'o has its strongest swells between April and October, but it is also considered one of the most dangerous. One wrong move and surfers could find themselves banging into sharp coral beneath the water's surface. Teahupo'o roughly translates to "wall of skulls." Travel from Paris to Polynesia usually involves multiple transfers and takes approximately 20 hours. Officials dismissed that concern arguing that only 48 surfers would compete, and many of them might choose to not even come to Paris, but instead travel directly to Tahiti.

La Vague Grand Paris expects to have the wave pool

open in 2023 and hopes there might still be a chance to sway the games' organizers into changing their minds. Sevrans, a northeast suburb of Paris, is less than 15 miles from the city center and will have a venue that can literally guarantee waves.

Even without the Olympic competition, the park can serve as a training ground for Olympic athletes, with some of the very best surfers coming to Sevrans to showcase their skills. The president of the French Federation of surfing, **Jean-Luc Arassus**, said that there are more surfers in the populous Paris region than anywhere else in France and that "there is great potential to find among this population, a future world champion."

La Vague Grand Paris could serve as a venue for the Paralympic Games which are organized in parallel with the Olympic Games. A 2001 agreement assures that host cities manage both the Olympic Games and the Paralympics Games.

Made-to-order waves offer surfers the chance to play or train in a structure that mimics ocean conditions, but with perfect waves and swell periods. Despite the high installation costs, wave pools and surf parks are being installed everywhere, from Asia to Europe to North America. The face of the sport is changing dramatically as surfers are no longer limited to ocean beaches.

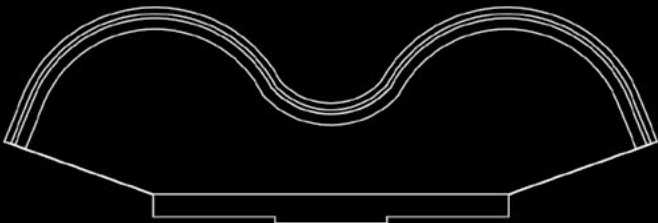


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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► **Women Of Influence:** Nancy Nelson Gorman — page 32 / **Gateway Ticketing** hosts webinars — page 35

Joyland Park handles shutdown challenges, reopens to high hopes

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

LUBBOCK, Texas — The road to reopening wasn't easy, and it came with a roller coaster-sized load of nervous anxiety. Joyland Park is one example of family-run traditional parks across the United States that faced a frightening uncertainty.

"We actually opened. We were open for a couple of weeks for spring break in March," said David and Kristi Dean, owners of Joyland.

Then the rug was pulled out from under them. During those weeks, the Deans had stationed hand sanitizer around the park.

"It was looming on the horizon," David said. "We were already trying to be proactive."

The Deans were thankful that their winter maintenance had been completed to get the park ready for spring break.

"We also had our employees back," added Kristi. "We at least know who to call to see who is interested in coming back."

The Deans understand that some of that seasonal staff was lost to them having to find other jobs.

Following the shutdown, the loss of much of the season made the viability of even keeping the park questionable. Joyland took to writing letters and communicating with not only government officials, but also its park fans to join in with a letter-writing campaign to encourage those making the decisions to allow parks to reopen. **Wonderland Park**, just to the north in Amarillo, encouraged its fans to do the same thing on its website.

"We were fortunate enough to be tied into some



Joyland welcomed back guests beginning June 12. The EnJOYment card (inset) was a hugely successful promotion to bring in revenue during the temporary shutdown. It served as an eight-visit season pass valid during 2020 and 2021.

AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY JOYLAND

influential people in high places," said David. "Hosting local city officials with events each year was beneficial. That was a direct line."

Being at the top regrettably causes one to bear the burden of the staffing below. The Deans were disappointed to lay off the full-time staff. Even David was removed from the payroll. Government aid helped, and David praised his local banks for working seven days a week to help businesses. Part of the heartbreak of letting staff go was relieved when the Dean family was able to bring many employees back on partway into the shutdown. They continued being vocal with city council members and engaged the community through Facebook, which really took off.

Now severely in debt, the park looked for possible solutions. One idea was the marketing concept of EnJOYment cards. Packaged deals for when

the park could reopen brought in a revenue stream while the park was in shutdown. The EnJOYment card offered a \$227 value for \$75, which includes eight visits, a free souvenir cup and any two days to bring a friend for free. The promotion was a great success.

"The support we received from our local community and within the state — wow! — it's really heartwarming. People really backed us up and didn't want to see us go out of business," said David. "It was super! It went way over the top and was more powerful than expected."

The lack of reasoning for not allowing parks to reopen, when water parks had been given the green light was a harsh sticking point of frustration for small-park owners, who felt they were being lumped in with the larger, more crowded theme parks.

"They haven't been able to give any reasoning behind it at

all," said Kristi.

"We have submitted plan after plan that would comply with any guidelines they were enforcing," added David.

The Deans also remained in communication with other small park owners but pointed out that regulations varied by state, which added to the uncertainty of any developments.

Following the conversation with *Amusement Today*, the Deans received good news on June 3 with Governor **Greg Abbott's** Phase III initiatives that allowed amusement parks to reopen with 50% capacity.

The park immediately set a schedule and communicated to fans and the community that Joyland Park would be reopening on June 12. The park quickly communicated with former employees.

"We've heard from almost everybody, and our return rate has been very good," Kristi said.

They also initiated job fairs on two weekends.

"As soon as it was announced we could reopen, we had all four news stations out at the park," said David. "We feel very blessed with the support of our community."

The park's website made the point to thank its supporters, as well as Senator **Charles Perry** and **Marc McDougal** and **Mike Toomey**, part of the governor's team.

"Five years ago, Lubbock had a terrible flood," said David. "We were underwater and that was devastating. We were able to work hard and reopen in about two weeks with a lot of praying and a lot of cussing. Hard work got us through that. This was different. This was a different kind of hard work."

With the approval to reopen, the process of bringing seasonal staff back on was underway.

"We have more yellow squares on the midway than you can imagine," said David.

As this issue of *AT* goes into production, Joyland has been able to welcome back its first guests in three months.

"This is so unprecedented," said Kristi. "You just try to survive through it. As prepared as you are or can be, your fate is in the hands of someone who has nothing to do with your business. That's the hardest thing about it."

"Years ago, we wrote emergency preparedness guidelines," said David. "Who in the world would have ever, EVER, thought something like this would come along."

Looking at the effects of COVID-19 on the future, David feels that if high school football or college football attendance is affected, Joyland could benefit from an extended season.

"Our fall could change considerably," said David.



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Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Nancy Nelson Gorman grew up at **Waldameer Park and Water World**, Erie, Pennsylvania, which is owned and operated by her father and mother, **Paul** and **Lane Nelson**. She returned to her hometown and family business in 1989 with her own family.

The park has grown from a small picnic area by Lake Erie in 1896 to 52 acres of more than 100 rides and attractions. It is the fourth oldest park in Pennsylvania and the 10th oldest in the nation. Paul Nelson took over ownership of the park from **Alex** and **Ruth Moeller** in the 1960s.

Accomplishments and affiliations...

- Member, International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)
- Member, Pennsylvania Amusement Parks and Attractions (PAPA)
- Member, VisitErie tourism

Caring for others Gorman's gift

ERIE, Pa. — Nancy Gorman knew at an early age she had a gift for caring for others. When it came time to set a career path, nursing was a natural choice. She followed that path and succeeded there. She worked as a nurse for 11 years, while marrying, moving locations and having three children.

She still finds herself surprised at times of how her life began on the grounds of Waldameer Park and Water World and that she is back in the family business with her parents, park owners Paul and Lane Nelson.

She is not complaining, certainly. She loves it there. She just never expected that life's twists and turns would lead her home.

"That was really never my intention," Gorman said.

Yet what she has found since was that her gift of caring for others can be used in any environment.

"I am still helping people," she said. "I am helping people have fun. I am helping people connect with their families. This park is so important to our community and our community is so important to us."

Gorman has many memories growing up playing and working in the park with her parents and two sisters.

"I remember one of my first jobs was putting wristbands on guests," she said. "Wristbands then were different. They were pieces of string with a metal clip. Then, we would stamp their hands."

She remembers being in a corn-eating contest once.

"I didn't win," she said.

She remembers going into the arcade and collecting things like little juice glasses and postcards. Her grandson now drinks juice from them.

And she remembers the very long hours, even when home during summer from college.

"When we worked, we worked," Gorman said. "The days were long. We

would begin at noon and work until 11 at night sometimes."

It wasn't always easy, either, watching her friends go off on vacation or going out at night as they got older.

"I got in trouble from time to time, 'dragging my feet,' my father would say," Gorman said.

But Gorman learned many things during those summers young people don't often learn such as how to handle unhappy guests, the importance of teamwork and the importance of treating everyone with respect.

"Growing up in an area where there was not much diversity, Waldameer guests provided an opportunity for me to experience and interact with people that were different from me on a daily basis," she said.

After high school graduation, Gorman enrolled in a five-year registered nursing program. She received a Bachelor of Science in psychology from Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania, and went on to the University of Rochester, Rochester, New York, where she received her Registered Nurse accreditation.

She landed her first nursing job at the University of Virginia Health Care System University Hospital, Charlottesville, Virginia. And it just so happened that a man named Steve Gorman was attending the University of Virginia in the masters program of mechanical engineering.

The two met and ended up getting married in 1985. After her husband received his masters, the young couple moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. He worked for General Electric. She got a nursing position at Good Samaritan Hospital in cardiothoracic surgery. Their first child, Brian, was born in 1987.

After several years in Cincinnati, they were ready to make another move. She was pregnant with their second child, Emily, and they wanted to be close to at least one set of parents.

Nancy Nelson Gorman

Retail Manager and Vice President
Waldameer Park and Water World
Erie, Pa.



They decided on her hometown, Erie. Her husband transferred there with GE and, after Emily's birth in 1989, she went back to nursing part time.

In 1991, their third child, David, was born. She decided then she would stay home for a while.

It was fun for her to watch her growing children enjoy riding the rides at Waldameer. The park had grown and was continuing to do so.

By the time all her children were in elementary school, Gorman's father approached her wanting her to oversee the park's puppet theater.

She agreed, not knowing that one yes was going to turn into another career for her. It was something that just seemed to happen all by itself. As the park grew, so did her involvement.

What began as overseeing a puppet theater, became a 20-year stint as the park's entertainment manager. What began as helping her mother in the gift shop, became being the retail manager for three large retail areas.

Her husband left his position at GE and joined Waldameer. He is now

the park's president.

Her children had worked at the park when they were young. Her oldest son, Brian, is now the park's manager of operations. He also is currently the PAPA president and VisitErie tourism board chairperson.

Her other two children, like her own two sisters, decided not to stay involved in the park business.

Her parents are still at the park — her father is here every day and her mother is mostly involved in human resources.

Waldameer is definitely a family park. And while that is a blessing, she admits working in a family business can be challenging at times.

"There has to be lots of love and forgiveness for it to work. There also has to be an atmosphere of respect for each other's ideas and opinions."

Gorman definitely sees a future for family owned and operated amusement parks.

"I think that is what gives us our charm, a sense of family. We have our hands in all parts of the operations."

—Pam Sherborne

ON THE MOVE**Disney promotes parks division team leaders**

BURBANK, Calif. — **Bob Chapek**, CEO of **The Walt Disney Co.**, recently announced a number of changes to the leadership team of the company's massive Disney Parks, Experiences and Products division.

Josh D'Amaro has been named chairman of the division, succeeding Chapek in the role. D'Amaro, a 22-year Disney leadership veteran who most recently served as president, **Walt Disney World Resort** (WDW), will oversee Disney's travel and leisure businesses, which include six theme park-resort destinations in the U.S., Europe and Asia; a cruise line; a vacation ownership program and a guided family adventure business, plus Disney's global consumer products operations.

Jeff Vahle, formerly president, Disney Signature Experiences, has been named president, WDW, succeeding D'Amaro. Vahle, a 30-year Disney cast member, now leads America's largest single-site workforce and will be responsible for all facets of business for the Central Florida resort, including its four theme parks, two water parks, 28 hotels, four golf courses, the **ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex** and the Disney Springs entertainment-shopping-dining complex. He will continue to oversee facilities and operations services for Disney theme parks worldwide.

Ken Potrock, who had served as president, Consumer Products, has become president, **Disneyland Resort**. With 25 years at the company, Potrock now oversees the Anaheim property's two theme parks, three hotels and the 20-acre Downtown Disney District entertainment, retail and shopping area. Potrock succeeds **Rebecca Campbell**, who was named chairman of Direct-to-Consumer and International for the company.

Two additional roles have shifted within the division. **Kareem Daniel**, formerly president, **Walt Disney Imagineering** Operations/Product Creation/Publishing/Games, has been named president, Consumer Products, Games and Publishing. **Thomas Mazloum**, previously senior vice president of Resort and Transportation Operations at WDW, has become president, Disney Signature Experiences.

Burbank, California-based creative design company **Miziker Entertainment** has promoted **Sean Chung** to the position of president. Los Angeles-born Chung, 31, with Miziker since 2014, has been on an eight-year trajectory in location-based entertainment that has taken him from his graduation from **ArtCenter College of Design** in Pasadena, California, to heading up a company with a distinguished international clientele. In addition to theme park attraction

design, Miziker is known for parades, live events, park-wide entertainment planning, technology solutions and special-format film production.

Chance Rides of Wichita, Kansas, has tapped **Mark Cornell** as head of business development for zoos, aquariums and location-based entertainment venues in North America. A 25-year attractions industry veteran, Cornell most recently served as senior vice president of **SimEx-Iwerks Entertainment**, where he created and led the attractions development division for more than 18 years. There, he worked closely with top zoos, aquariums, hotels, casinos and entertainment venues in the U.S. to design innovative attractions with high guest appeal that have generated significant revenue.

Chicago-based **Stern Pinball, Inc.**, has appointed **Raymond Davidson** as game development software engineer. Davidson, currently the first-ranked competitive pinball player in the world, joins the programming team in the company's game design studio to help push more content and updates for released and future pinball machine titles. "Raymond's pinball IQ is off the charts," said **George Gomez**, executive vice president and chief creative officer at Stern. "We are very excited to add his talents to our studio as we continue to grow." Davidson previously worked for **Amazon**, **Rippl** and **Smilebox**.

Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, recently added attractions industry veterans **Dana Meerschaert** and **Patrick MacFarlane** to its management team.

As director of maintenance, Meerschaert is responsible for facility and park maintenance, including rides. After working her way through college at **Cedar Point** in Sandusky, Ohio, she landed in management positions at **Elitch Gardens** in Denver, **Darien Lake** in New York and **Wild Adventures** in Valdosta, Georgia, as well as in the corporate offices of **Herschend Family Entertainment** in Peachtree Corners, Georgia. Most recently, she was assistant general manager and director of maintenance and safety at **Fantasy Island** amusement park in Grand Island, New York.

As base operations manager, MacFarlane is responsible for base operations, including parking, ticketing and gondola operations. He joined the park as base operations manager in 2019 after eight years with Elitch Gardens, where his management experience ranged from parking, ticketing, point-of-sale and customer service to recruiting, training, developing and leading teams. His continuing education includes: **National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials** Operations Level II, **Amusement Industry Manufacturers and Suppliers (AIMS)** Operations Level II and **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions** Operators Forum.

Both Meerschaert and MacFarlane teach courses at annual safety forums conducted by AIMS and **International Ride Training (iRoc)**.



D'Amaro



Vahle



Potrock



Chung



Cornell



Davidson



Meerschaert



MacFarlane

OBITUARIES**Roy Horn, famous magician, philanthropist**

LAS VEGAS — Roy Horn of Siegfried & Roy, the duo whose flashy magic act astonished millions, died of complications from the coronavirus May 8. He was 75.

Born in Nordenham, Germany, Horn met Siegfried Fischbacher, also a native of Germany, on a cruise ship in 1957. Fischbacher performed magic tricks, with Horn serving as his assistant; eventually Horn suggested they add his own pet cheetah to the act. They honed their animal/magic show in small clubs in Germany and Switzerland in the mid-1960s. Their break came while playing a Monte Carlo casino, where an agent invited them to Las Vegas. The pair soon debuted at the Tropicana hotel-casino on the Strip.

The illusionists became popular in the 1970s, receiving their first star billing in 1978 in the Stardust's "Lido de Paris." Their show "Beyond Belief" opened in 1981 at the Frontier and ran seven years.

Horn and Fischbacher became U.S. citizens in 1988. Two years later, they took their act to the Mirage hotel-casino. By the time they signed a lifetime contract with the resort in 2001, it was estimated they had performed 5,000 shows grossing a total of more than \$1 billion. In addition, the pair's conservation efforts gained international recognition for helping to save rare white tigers and white lions from extinction.

Horn was injured in 2003 when a tiger attacked him onstage at the Mirage. He sustained severe neck injuries and partial paralysis, and later he suffered a stroke. The incident ended Horn and Fischbacher's long-running Strip production. In 2006, they were inducted into the Las Vegas Walk of Stars.

Flags in Nevada were flown at half-staff May 18 in honor of Horn.



Horn

Jan Sherman, producer for Sally Dark Rides

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Jan Sherman, formerly a longtime writer and producer for Sally Dark Rides, passed away earlier this spring due to complications from diabetes and cancer.

Sherman was born in 1939. She joined Sally Dark Rides in 1982, producing soundtracks and scripts for the company's animated productions. Her early work included "Daniel and the Dixie Diggers," "Bubba Bear and the Badlands Band," "Billy Jo and the Bluegrass Bears," and "Merlin and the Magic Music Makers."

When the company shifted into dark ride production, Jan handled her new responsibilities with diligence and enthusiasm. She led the installation of the first dark ride refurbishment at Alton Towers Resort in Staffordshire, England — launching Sally's new direction of building and reviving dark rides worldwide.

Sherman also created Sally's advertising and print materials for more than 20 years and served as a key company spokesperson. She retired from Sally in 2014.

"We're grateful to have had the force that was Jan Sherman for all those years," said Sally CEO John Wood. "She will be missed."



Sherman

Larry Wine, former Six Flags park manager

PACIFIC, Mo. — Larry Wine, a former manager at several parks operated by Six Flags Entertainment Corp., died April 3 after a long illness. He was 68.

Wine was born to Dot and Floyd Wine on June 11, 1951, in Arlington, Texas. He graduated from Arlington High School and The University of Texas at Arlington.

In 1976, while in high school, Wine took a job as a ride operator at Six Flags Over Texas in Arlington and eventually worked his way to the top. He also held managerial positions at Six Flags St. Louis and Six Flags Great America in Gurnee, Illinois. More recently, beginning in 2009, he was manager of Magic Springs Theme and Water Park in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Wine is survived by his daughters, Emily Alexenko and Amanda Comeaux; two brothers, Floyd Wine, Jr., and Bill Wine; and a sister, Susie Wine McAlister.



Wine

MARKET WATCH

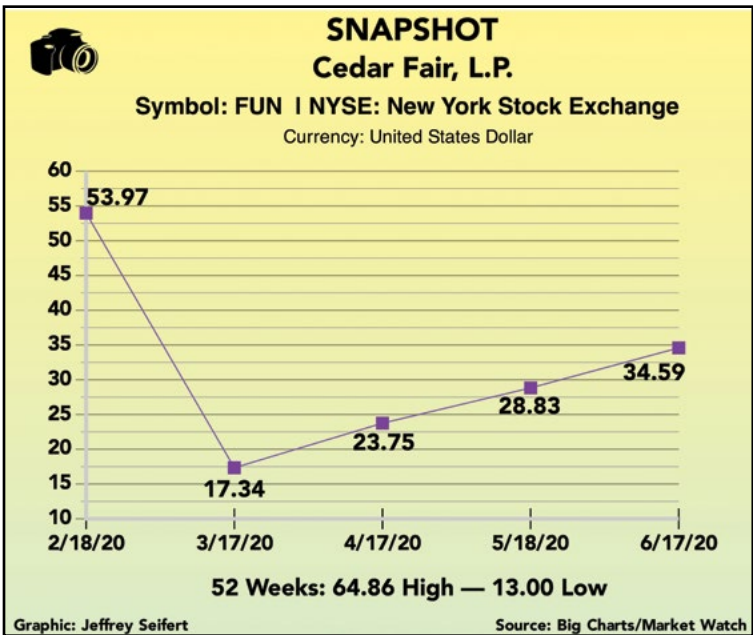
COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 06/17/20	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	57.09	64.97	33.00
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	34.59	64.86	13.00
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	39.22	47.74	31.70
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	117.65	153.41	79.07
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.15	0.24	0.09
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	36.96	79.80	12.55
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	3165.00	4830.00	2080.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.47	1.40	0.45
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	15.50	17.95	9.08
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	18.97	34.63	5.90
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	58.03	135.31	19.25
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	649.00	1265.00	490.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	17.28	36.96	6.75
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	23.59	59.52	8.75
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	716.00	788.00	550.00
Village Roadshow	AU:VRL	ASX	2.13	4.10	0.77

STOCK PRICES ABOVE ARE GENERALLY QUOTED IN THE FOREIGN CURRENCY IN WHICH THE COMPANY IS LOCATED

Worldwide Markets: ASX, Australian Securities Exchange; CSE, Copenhagen Stock Exchange; LSE, London Stock Exchange; NYSE, New York Stock Exchange; NASDAQ, National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; SEHK, Hong Kong Stock Exchange; SZSE, Shenzhen Stock Exchange; TSEC, Taiwan Stock Exchange, Corp.; TYO/TSE, Tokyo Stock Exchange
—SOURCES: Bloomberg.com; Wall Street Journal



Masks on roller coasters made their debut in the U.S. with the reopening of central Florida parks, including Busch Gardens Tampa. COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS TAMPA



DIESEL PRICES		
Region (U.S.)	As of 06/15/20	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$2.501	-\$0.598
Midwest	\$2.256	-\$0.701
Gulf Coast	\$2.174	-\$0.646
Mountain	\$2.346	-\$0.726
West Coast	\$2.579	-\$0.659
California	\$3.218	-\$0.788

CURRENCY	
On 06/17/20 \$1 USD =	
0.8849	EURO
0.7923	GBP (British Pound)
107.37	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.9492	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.4456	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3550	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

BUSINESS WATCH

Chuck E. Cheese \$1 billion in debt

IRVING, Texas — Creditors to **CEC Entertainment Inc.**, which runs **Chuck E. Cheese** and **Peter Piper Pizza**, are weighing restructuring options including bankruptcy as the company seeks to get through the pandemic that has shuttered its locations. A Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing would allow CEC, acquired by private equity firm **Apollo Global Management, Inc.**, in a 2014 leveraged buyout, to keep some locations operating and permanently close weaker ones to minimize costs. Chuck E. Cheese alone has over 600 outlets, which would be evaluated for closures as part of the potential court-supervised process, the people said.

The chain came up with some creative ways to stave off bankruptcy, including operating under the name **Pasqually's Wings and Pizza** on apps like **Grubhub** and **DoorDash**, in order to keep some cash flowing in during the recent COVID-19 shutdown.

Main Event Gets \$80M investment for stake

NORTH SYDNEY, Australia — **Ardent Leisure Group**, the Australia-based parent company of **Main Event Entertainment**, announced that **RedBird Capital Partners** will acquire a minority stake in the business in exchange for an \$80 million investment. "RedBird chose to invest in Dallas-based Main Event because of its background in building companies in the sports and live entertainment industries," said **Gerry Cardinale**, founder and managing partner of RedBird.

RedBird Capital Partners is a New York City-based investment firm with strong operations in Dallas and has worked with brands such as the **NFL** and the **New York Yankees**.

Disney pledges millions to help social injustice

ORLANDO — **The Walt Disney Company** has pledged \$5 million to support nonprofit organizations that advance social justice, beginning with a \$2 million donation to the **NAACP** to further their longstanding work promoting social justice by eliminating disparities and racial discrimination through their advocacy and education programs.

"The killing of **George Floyd** has forced our nation to once again confront the long history of injustice that black people in America have suffered, and it is critical that we stand together, speak out and do everything in our power to ensure that acts of racism and violence are never tolerated," said **Bob Chapek**, chief executive officer of The Walt Disney Company. "This \$5 million pledge will continue to support the efforts of nonprofit organizations such as the NAACP that have worked tirelessly to ensure equality and justice."

The pledge is part of Disney's commitment to support organizations that advance social justice. The Company has also previously provided millions of dollars in grants to help students from underrepresented groups make the dream of higher education a reality, including \$2.5 million to the **United Negro College Fund**.

Apex Parks approved for sale to lenders

ALISO VIEJO, Calif. — **Apex Parks Group** received Delaware court approval Thursday for a \$60 million sale of its assets to prepetition lender **Cerberus Business Finance LLC** and a case settlement with unsecured creditors.

During a hearing conducted via telephone and video conferencing, debtor attorney **Laura Davis Jones** of **Pachulski Stang Ziehl & Jones LLP** said the debtor had canvassed more than 100 potential buyers for Apex Parks' assets but received only one qualified bid from an affiliate of its lenders, **APX Operating**. The \$60 million bid consists of a \$45 million credit bid of prepetition debt held by Cerberus and the assumption of significant liabilities of the debtor.

The official committee of unsecured creditors assented to the sale given a settlement with Cerberus where the buyer agreed to leave behind certain causes of action in the estate for the benefit of those unsecured creditors. The committee also waived its rights to challenge the validity of secured liens held by Cerberus.

Gateway Ticketing Systems' industry webinars inform, support

Regular series offers interactive forum on crisis management

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

GILBERTSVILLE, Pa. — During the second week of March, when **Randy Josselyn**, **Matthew Hoenstine** and other team members of the global ticketing software solutions company **Gateway Ticketing Systems, Inc.**, attended a gathering of industry professionals in Los Angeles hosted by the **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)**, the business of fun and the American way of life were on the cusp of capsizing.

On March 11, the first day of the three-day summit, the **World Health Organization** officially declared the novel coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19 — then already rampaging through Asia and Europe — a pandemic. Two days later, President **Donald J. Trump** announced a national emergency as the outbreak emerged in the U.S.

Within seven days, California and its many parks and attractions would be on lockdown, and other cities and regions around the nation would soon follow suit.

"I'd say that was the week where I really felt that the world changed," said Josselyn, principal, wildlife and conservation, at Gateway.

Josselyn and Hoenstine, principal, destinations, at Gateway, told *Amusement Today* that, while they were not expecting a shutdown of the U.S. economy, they were not completely caught off-guard by the news that broke during the IAAPA conference. Since earlier this past winter, they had been monitoring the outbreak's overseas impacts through their company's international client base.

"Because parks in Asia had already begun to shutter, we had started to understand what their needs were," Hoenstine said. "Being onsite with attractions in California that week enabled us to help them with some things that they would need to wrap up to effect a closure."

By the second evening of the Los Angeles event, the Gateway team was powwowing urgently on a more formal and focused plan to communicate what it had already learned from its foreign customers to other attraction operators comprising its clientele. "We have an amazing community of customers, and we knew we

needed to talk to them as soon as possible" about how they could continue to deliver the best guest experience, Josselyn said. A webinar was the agreed-upon format. "That was a Thursday evening, and we were set to return home Friday. And we said, 'Next Wednesday! Let's do it.'"

Gateway's **Webinar Wednesdays** series was launched March 18 with "Galaxy Best Practices During a Time of Crisis," named for Gateway's highly integrative Galaxy software. Cohosted by Josselyn and Hoenstine, who represent a combined 45 years of attractions experience (including admissions system management for **Walt Disney Parks and Resorts** and **Universal Orlando Resort**, respectively), each typically 90-minute episode, streamed online via the **Webex Events** platform, features industry experts, helpful charts and graphs, and a Q&A-enabled audience that was averaging 420 attendees as of early June. The series ran weekly through May, then went biweekly as attractions began reopening.

"Our customers were really receptive to this opportunity to gather and talk and listen and share," Josselyn said. "The day after our first webinar, it was logical for us to say, 'Let's really open this up to everybody.'"

Added Hoenstine: "We wanted to use all of our learnings and make sure everyone in the industry had all the tools they might need, because a pandemic is nothing that anybody ever plans for or expects. We just realized, 'Hey, there is this need and we've got ways to help.'"

In addition to providing key takeaways for attractions operators (see sidebar) from seasoned panelists — the diverse guest roster has included **Kevin Kopeny** of **Universal Studios Hollywood** operations, park operations executive **Alan Mahony** of **Atlantis Sanya** water park and marine life-themed resort in China, and industry experts **Matt Heller** and **Josh Liebman** of the podcast *AttractionsPros* — the webinars have served an important moral support function at a singularly debilitating time for the business.

"I wouldn't say that was intentional, but it's authentic because it's kind of who we are," Josselyn said. "Matthew and I love this industry and the people that are working in it, and we love sharing. When you have a strong passion for this industry, the emotions are going to surface. And whether you're a friend of ours in the United States or Canada or Asia or Europe — whether you're



Gateway's May 27 webinar, "These Attractions Have Already Reopened — Here's What They Learned So Far," discussed the strategies and experiences of Atlantis Sanya resort on Hainan Island, China, with Alan Mahony, vice president of marine and water park operations (lower right in webinar screen view). COURTESY GATEWAY TICKETING SYSTEMS, INC.

using our ticketing software or not — we're all in this together."

"Randy and I have sat in the seats that people participating in the webinar have sat in," Hoenstine said. "We have been yelled at by park guests, we have had joyous moments with employees of accomplishing certain things. So the focus of the webinar concept, as in our day-to-day business, became, 'What would I need if I'm out there struggling right now, especially with something I haven't dealt with before?'"

Topics have run the gamut, with episodes dedicated to strategizing reopening, transitioning to a capacity-managed attraction, generating revenue outside the box, managing pass updates, analyzing recent industry consumer surveys and more.

The April 29 webinar, "Recreating Trust with Your Guests & Retraining Your Team," featuring panelists from *Attraction Pros* and **Zoo Miami** in addition to Gateway's own business solutions manager, **Kelly Bules**, resonated strongly with Hoenstine. "Those are the only things that are going to make us successful coming out of this," he said. "If we can't effectively communicate, if we can't demonstrate how we are a safe place to be, I don't know how we get the industry back. We have such a great history when it comes to safety and doing all the right things. This is a real inflection point for us to make sure that we double down on that and get that word out."

Topic choices have been based on the hosts' instincts and pooled news research, as well as questions typed in during each episode by registered attendees (fielded and organized by a behind-the-scenes crew) and the conversational direction by the end of a given episode.

"Matthew and I have a good feel for what we'd want to hear about," Josselyn said. "We usu-

ally propose a couple ideas: 'I think next week should be this, and then let's do this the following week.' So maybe there's some kind of rhythm. That's kind of how it got started. And then, going forward, as we kind of had an idea of what may be a good fit the next week, we asked or polled people during the webinar and listened to them."

One of the hosts spends some time with each panelist in advance for a casual work-through of the proposed topic.

"Those discussions ultimately turn into the webinar," Hoenstine said. "But we really don't put the panelists together for a dry run. On the day of

the webinar, the conversation is genuine — it's happening in that moment. And we're very dynamic, making decisions on the fly about what we need to drill into more as we get questions from the attendees and then pivoting based on the needs of the community."

Both hosts believe in the industry's resilience, which, reminded Josselyn, is founded on innovation. "The marketing message is, 'Hey, we get it. Things are different. But look how we're going to do it,' he said, noting enthusiastic and informative reopening approaches deployed by **Europa-Park** in Germany and **Efteling** in the Netherlands. "I love the creative spirit of our industry and that we're going to be a place of joy and happiness for all these families that are going through some tough times."

"The industry is going to survive because we deliver unique experiences that you cannot get in any other way," said Hoenstine. "People want the opportunity to socialize; they want to be around their family and friends. Attractions give us the ability to be together in an environment that brings joy and happiness."

For upcoming webinars, attendee registration and viewing previously recorded webinars, plus Gateway's line of COVID-19 operational support products, visit the company online.

•gatewayticketing.com

Gateway's top 10 takeaways from 'Webinar Wednesdays'

- Capacity-managed and timed tickets are essential to maintaining social distancing and cleanliness standards at your attraction.
- Make sure staff feel safe and are fully trained to encourage adherence to new procedures and put visitors at ease.
- Reopening language should emphasize the strengthening of strict standards for cleanliness and safety *that already exist*.
 - Key factors for luring guests back: communication and social proof. Leverage all marketing channels to over-communicate and demonstrate enhanced safety, sanitation and social distancing.
- If you cannot open, deliver value in a different way to drive revenue. (**Typhoon Texas** water parks in Austin and Houston sold their famous barbecue as takeout, and **Harkins Theatres** in Arizona sold their popular popcorn out of the parking lot.)
- The general consensus seems to be *not* to lower ticket prices upon reopening. Targeted promotions and discounts can always be run, but a structural decrease in price is hard to reverse.
- Also, price holistically. Offer value-added components such as complimentary merchandise, a picnic lunch, exclusive early entry for members, etc.
- A successful reopening relies on the blessing of your local or state government. Work with them and adhere to their guidelines.
- Determine which attractions in your venue that you can open and operate profitably. Not all need to open at once; some can be rotated. Your guests will simply be glad to be back.
- Simple changes can be impactful. (Instead of developing an expensive app to make its touchscreens contactless, **The National WWII Museum** in New Orleans provides a nine-cent stylus to each guest.)



SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► Chance develops dividers for train — page 39 / Ralph S. Alberts, Inc. offers BactiBlock coating — page 40

Innovative water park looks to future with new expansion

Rulantica's operations succeed on energy efficiency and planning

AT: Tim Baldwin

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RUST, Germany — The introduction of Europa Park's second gate, Rulantica, wowed observers — the industry as well as the public — when it debuted with a soft opening last December. The level of theming placed into an indoor water park, as well as the elegant touches and innovative guest experience amenities, made the park an immediate worldwide standout. (See AT, February 2020.)

Much of Rulantica's success comes from years and years of master planning. Even with the temporary shutdown owing to COVID-19, the park reopened on June 10 and is looking ahead to new growth. Much of this is a result of a bigger vision.

"When you walk onto a piece of land and you have 76 acres, it seems like a big piece of property," said Chip Cleary, senior consultant on Rulantica and the surrounding resort development. "All the designers and the Mack family worked very closely to take all the dreams of the next 20 years and placed it on this property. You soon realize that 76 acres is not as much land as you think it is. From the beginning we had to be very efficient with the property so that we could develop all these dreams in the future. The master plan went from a wish list — hotels, a dining and entertainment district, a big water park and some other surprises — that became our bible."

Indoor water parks are not as known in Europe as the United States, so educating the public what the concept even was created an initial challenge. How does one explain what a lazy river is? While not unheard of, an indoor world of water-play was still a fresh concept.



Solar panels covering much of Rulantica's parking lot (above) make for energy-efficient operations. One of the notable innovations of Rulantica is the multilevel heated flooring (below left) throughout the facility. Lighting within Rulantica — both day and night — is 100% LED (below right). COURTESY EUROPA-PARK; AT/ JEFFREY SEIFERT, TIM BALDWIN



Europa-Park studied and developed it for five years and refined it into a superior product. Along the way, efficient operational methods have helped make the industry newcomer a pioneer.

Upon arrival, guests can hardly help but notice huge solar panels covering Rulantica's parking lot.

"There is a building at the water park we call Energy Central," said Michael Kreft von Byern, director of Rulantica. "That is where we interface with the city power if we need it. The energy generated from the [solar

panels] goes into a management system that assigns it to our own grid. If our generators are running, it can go there. When the hotel needs it, it can go there. The peak of that energy generated is during the day, and the peak of the water park is during the day. In the morning, the hotel wants hot water for showering, and then the hotel goes to sleep, so to speak. It's a very balanced system where the hotel, a big water park, Energy Central and an energy management system all synchronize together."

Also, outside the facility,

natural gas turbine generators — part of Energy Central — provide electricity for Rulantica and Hotel Krønassår. The benefits here are multifold. Recirculated water cools the engines which in turns makes about 80% of the hot water needed to heat the pools year-round.

"We're getting two benefits out of this," said Cleary. "We're producing clean energy and we're producing a tremendous amount of hot water."

That hot water also heats the floor, perhaps an industry first. Rulantica is built on mul-

tiples levels. Heating the floor makes for a more comfortable experience. Many guests arrive to the park via a direct bridge from Hotel Krønassår. Even in colder climates, hotel guests never have to venture outdoors.

"The Mack family challenged us from the beginning to be bold, be innovative," said Cleary. "We were really encouraged to go after different ideas."

The Rulantica team toured 26 facilities around the world. One observation noted was that people, particularly moms, felt when the floor and temperature near the floor had a chill.

"The heat was coming from the ceiling and traveling down, and that is very difficult to push heat down," Cleary told *Amusement Today*. "In Germany, heating the floor is a very common thing in your house. That's a main heat driver. It just seemed like common sense — heat the building from the floor up. We noticed the floor being cool in the winter was not a guest satisfier, so it was a combination of innovation and common sense, and it has worked out spectacularly."

In turn, the park does not have to heat as much air in the building.

Because of the elaborate theming, the park has a magical quality to it, but it takes on a different ambience as night falls. Illuminating the water park is done with 100% LED lighting.

Less than a year old, expansion is coming quickly. For its first summer season, Rulantica has added to the mix of Scandinavian landscapes, mystical sceneries, fantastic characters and epic attractions by adding new highlights outdoors. Relaxation seekers can enjoy sunbathing in the extended outdoor

► See RULANTICA, page 37



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StarGuard Elite lifeguard program certified

ORLANDO — **StarGuard Elite** (SGE) and the **Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code** (CMAHC) together announced the CMAHC certification of the StarGuard Lifeguard Program – the first ever CMAHC certification of a lifeguard training program. This achievement promotes the health and wellness of lifeguards who complete SGE training and the aquatic facilities they serve.

The CMAHC certification program was launched in 2018 to help educate the public about products and services that meet the science-based standards in the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Model Aquatic Health Code** (MAHC). The guidance in the MAHC helps reduce the risk for disease outbreaks, drownings, and chemical injuries at public aquatic facilities. The CMAHC awards certification to services or products that comply with the relevant or applicable standards in the latest MAHC edition.

"As a long-time supporter of the MAHC and its evidence-based guidelines for aquatic health and safety, we are extremely proud to have the StarGuard Lifeguard Program receive the first ever CMAHC certification for a lifeguard training program. We hope this brings confi-



dence to all lifeguards who complete our program and the aquatic managers who hire them," said **Wess Long**, president of StarGuard ELITE.

The StarGuard lifeguard program is an industry-leading training curriculum and internationally-recognized certification. SGE's evidence-based protocols and adult learner activities are the foundation of a curriculum that fosters practical skills and retention. SGE partners with **American Safety & Health Institute** (ASHI) for all CPR, AED, first aid, and emergency oxygen training elements that are used in the program. The StarGuard program is built to be objective, realistic, and adaptable.

►RULANTICA Continued from page 36

area with more than 1,000 sun beds. Around the Frigg Tempel outdoor area, 12 new covered "Comfort Islands" allow visitors to completely unwind and relax. The exclusive beach chairs for two people accentuate the vacation feeling of pure escape.

More dramatically, Rulantica is beginning Phase II. Projected to open in 2021, a large outdoor area will bring an abundance of more interactive space to the water park. Dubbed Svalgurok, the expansion takes the play structure concept and places the Europa-Park themed magic throughout with iconic sculptures of dragons and vipers. Construction for the expansion of the water world has already begun. Since the focus in Rulantica so far has mainly been on an extensive indoor offer, the

Two new areas will be featured Phase II of the project, including several new slides. COURTESY EUROPA-PARK



next step broadens the outdoor opportunities, particularly for summer vacationers looking for extended visits.

"Europa-Park had no shortage of ambition when they came to us looking to expand Rulantica with an iconic attraction," said **Jeff Janovich**, VP business development and strategic accounts, ProSlide. "Our design teams always love a chal-

lenge, so we worked together with the **Mack Creative** team to create a totally custom-designed multilevel play structure with a unique layout, extensive ride mix, custom theming and a big surprise. And to top it off, it's the largest one in the world!"

"As Rulantica grows, good ideas can still be refined, but they still have to fit the master plan," said **Kreft von Byern**.

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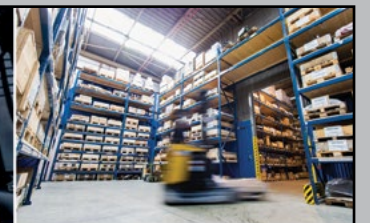
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Amusement industry suppliers continue leading the charge to help

INTERNATIONAL — A sense of community will often spur people to react. As witnessed in last months, the amusement industry has stepped forward to offer support. As the dramatic shock of the coronavirus pandemic has lessened, the support still continues.

Hunter Novotny, engineer at **Larson International**, did some exploring online. He wanted to help his local hospital in Plainview, Texas. He was able to find a CNN article online and was able to download a file for the company's 3-D printer.

"I had no design time at all. We've just been able to give them to the hospital as we had them available," said Novotny. "They now have ample supply."

The masks created by Larson had a square component within the mask that filters could be placed inside and exchanged as needed.

"We were also making ear-saver bands to help the workers who were wearing elastic all day," he said. "They have hooks and wrap around your head to help keep the elastic off your ears."

Novotny was driven by a sense of hope. The year 2020 has



Using 3D printing, Larson International provided masks (left) to a local hospital. The Baltimore community was helped by a partnership between Premier Rides and The Sunac Group to offer face masks for at-home activity boxes from The Living Classroom (right).
COURTESY LARSON INTERNATIONAL, PREMIER RIDES

offered every citizen numerous opportunities to reach out and assist one's fellow man.

Premier Rides shifted gears to promote community well-being and assurance by donating thousands of face masks to the Baltimore-based **Living Classrooms Foundation** whose mission is to disrupt the cycle of poverty and help communities become safer, stronger and healthier by meeting individuals, especially children, where they are and building skills for life.

The donation was made possible through the joint

efforts of Premier Rides, the **Sunac Culture and Tourism Group**, and theme park industry professional **Tony Koh**.

The Sunac Group owns and operates world-class theme parks in China and expressed interest during a recent project meeting with Premier Rides that they wanted to be part of the COVID-19 solution and asked how they help. Through discussions, a cooperative arrangement shipped thousands of face masks to support the Premier team, their families and their local community. Premier

Rides is working with Sunac Culture and Tourism Group on a world's first robotic coaster project, which is expected to open later this year.

Jim Seay, president of Premier Rides said, "We are humbled by and are beyond appreciative of their generosity. Immediately we knew that paying it forward to Living Classrooms would be the perfect way to fulfill their wish and to support our team and the Baltimore community who are still under safer-at-home restrictions."



The Living Classrooms' Education Department has been creating and distributing age-appropriate STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) activity boxes with supplies and instructions to engage students with hands-on educational activities that can be done at home, with or without online lessons. Each box also contains a bar of soap, instructions for effective hand washing, a science lesson about how handwashing destroys germs associated with viruses like the novel coronavirus, and packets of hand sanitizer. Because of the coordinated efforts of Premier Rides and its partners, face masks are now included in all of them, which had been challenging in the past.

"Another example of kindness is that of industry professional Tony Koh, who personally shipped KN95 masks to us. There is no question that our industry is like a family," added Seay. "We work together to create lifetime memories for families around the globe, and when things get tough, we come together to support one another and our communities."

—Tim Baldwin

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Plexiglass dividers have guests hopping aboard Chance train

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — New Plexiglass dividers on the five **Chance Rides** C.P. Huntington trains at the **St. Louis Zoo** have guests jumping aboard to ride without hesitation after the zoo reopened last month.

The zoo reopened June 10 with member-only days and then June 13 for all guests. It had been closed since mid-March due to safety concerns with the coronavirus pandemic.

Ryan Jeffery, director visitor services, said just after reopening, things were going smoothly.

"Well, so far, after just one day, it is going pretty good," Jeffery said. "We are a free zoo so people just typically walk up. Converting to timed-base admissions has been a little challenging. We have a link on our website for people to make reservations but are having a lot of people call in to make them, too. I just think everyone is happy to be here."

Since zoos were among



The St. Louis Zoo has installed plexiglass dividers on all five of its Chance C.P. Huntington trains. The dividers, made by Chance Rides, were in place when the zoo reopened on June 10. It had been closed since mid-March due to health concerns of COVID-19. COURTESY ST. LOUIS ZOO

the first attraction-type businesses able to reopen and zoos are primarily the locations for the C.P. Huntington trains, **Dick Chance**, Chance Rides, said his company members came together to see what they could do to help.

"We wanted to come up with something to provide a little extra barrier and protection to our clients," Chance said. "We came up with the dividers. With social distancing in place, the train operators may only be able to fill up every other seat."

We sent St. Louis Zoo a prototype. They liked it so well they ordered the dividers for all five of their trains.

Not being able to fill all the seats up on the trains was definitely one of the reasons Jeffery said they decided to go with the plexiglass dividers. The train is an extra cost at the zoo. Guests pay \$7.95 a day and can get on and off as they choose. There also are other paid attractions, which guests can bundle together with the train for \$10.95.



"Our trains are incredibly popular," Jeffery said. "We will have 500,000 riders on that train in a bad year and, in a good year, 800,000. If we just used social distancing, we wouldn't be able to get as many riders."

Plus, he said, there were concerns that if the trains were moving, the virus could pass from someone at the front to someone at the back.

"We had heard those concerns internally and from surveys we had sent out," Jeffery

said. "There has been absolutely no hesitation of guests getting on for a ride."

The dividers are attached to the top of the seats and run three feet up.

Chance said they have sold eight to 10 sets of the dividers. The company didn't have to make any equipment changes to make them.

"We had everything right here," Chance said, of the ride manufacturing plant in Wichita, Kansas.

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Newly developed BactiBlock coating offers protection from bacteria

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

MOUNTOURSVILLE, Pa. — In business for 55 years, 55% of the custom-molding business the **Ralph S. Alberts Company, Inc.** conducts is for the amusement and recreation industries. Applications include foam safety and restraint system padding and fiber-reinforced plastic vehicle bodies. In wake of the recent pandemic, the company has added a coating that kills all types of bacteria.

Amusement Today talked with company President **Seth Alberts** about BactiBlock, the product they introduced. “We anticipated our clients’ needs and started developing value-added solutions. We sought to bring additional protection, safety, assurance, comfort and peace of mind to our customers’ guests and employees through industry reopenings.”

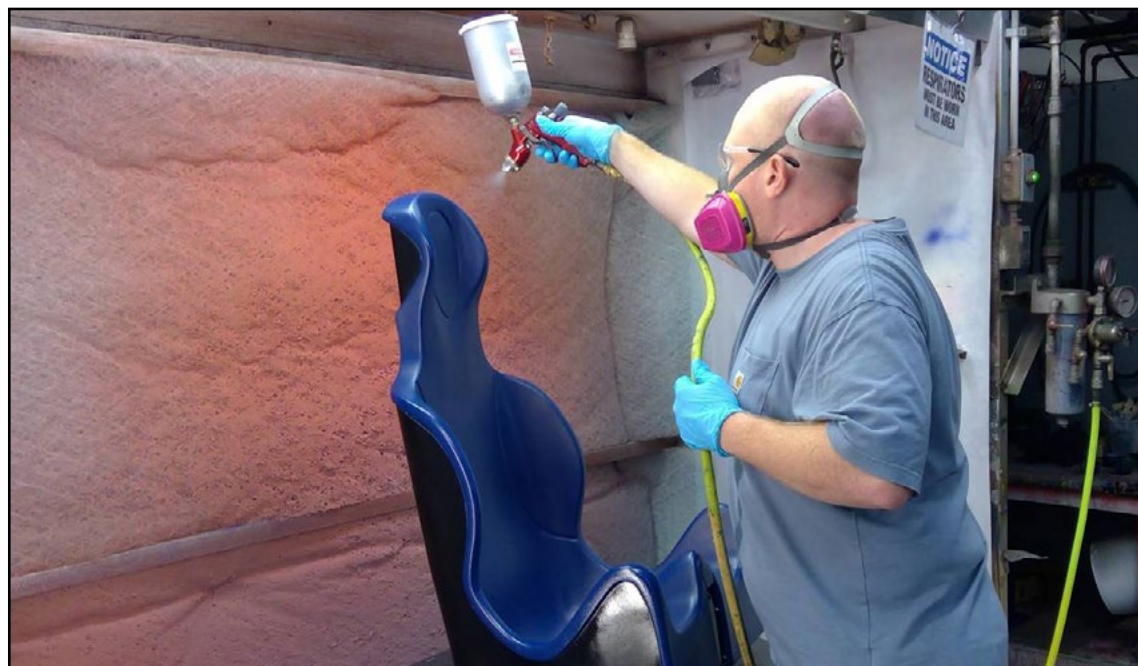
They worked with their suppliers to develop a coating that could be applied to the components they manufacture that did just that.



“With multiple contact surfaces on any amusement ride, the coating applied to our foam parts will help eliminate the spread of germs, bacteria and viruses — including all coronaviruses,” said third generation owner, Alberts.

Initially, the Ralph S. Alberts Company focused its attention on applying the ionic silver coating on foam safety and padding devices, along with certain interactive components they manufacture. Now the company is exploring utilizing BactiBlock with Fiberglass and composite ride vehicle bodies that are also manufactured at the facility.

Alberts talked about the health benefits of the coating. “The proprietary and patent-pending BactiBlock technology is based on silver-func-



Jim Root, paint lead and quality control for the Ralph S. Alberts Company applies a coating of BactiBlock to a ride vehicle seat. COURTESY RALPH S. ALBERTS COMPANY, INC.

tionalized clay that creates a naturally sourced and highly efficient antimicrobial product. The additive prevents the growth of bacteria, mold, fungus and other microorganisms, which also makes our coating a powerful tool against odors and stains.

“The active ingredient

in our BactiBlock coating is ionic silver (Ag), a naturally occurring element with a well-known antimicrobial spectrum, as well as being widely recognized as safe for human contact. Silver is a broad-range antimicrobial agent that has been proven effective against most harmful microor-

ganisms present in everyday life, such as E.coli, Legionella, Pseudomonas, Salmonella, S. aureus, Aspergillus Niger among others,” said Alberts.

The coating is designed for long-term applications and although durability in most

► See BLOCK, page 42

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AIMS connectED online learning approved by the state of California

We are thrilled to share **AIMS International** is now an approved provider of continuing education for the **State of California's Permanent Amusement Ride (PAR)** division's Qualified Safety Inspector (QSI) program. Anyone holding a current QSI certification can fulfill the State's renewal requirements using AIMS International's new online learning platform, AIMS connectED. To meet the meet the State's Title 8 requirements as an approved provider, the AIMS connectED program needed to provide courses relevant to the job of an amusement ride inspector, be taught by qualified instructors and be updated regularly to keep up with current industry standards. AIMS was able to demonstrate compliance with Title 8 and received approval on June 9, 2020.

"Thank you for providing this important education program for amusement ride inspectors," said **Nancy Medeiros**, PAR Certification

Program's regional manager, in a letter to AIMS staff. "Your program meets all the requirements to be approved as a course provider, and I am pleased to inform you that the State of California is certifying your organization as a Permanent Amusement Ride QSI Course Provider."

While California requires that QSIs complete 30 hours of continuing education from an approved provider every two years, AIMS connectED is currently the only approved provider of on-line continuing education courses for the State of California QSI program. Those interested in online education for renewal of their California QSI or AIMS Certification can visit aimsintl.org/education.

**AIMS Certification
renewal deadline extended to
September 30, 2020**

To assist AIMS members and certificate holders during these difficult

times, AIMS International has made the decision to extend the deadline for its 2020 certification renewal until September 30. "It became clear very quickly that many AIMS certificate holders were either furloughed or working from home during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic," said **M.J. Brewer**, AIMS executive director, "and found it very difficult to complete the requirements for certification renewal."

To ease some of the stress as attractions around the world are working hard to reopen their gates to guests, the AIMS board of directors has approved the decision to extend the renewal deadline for 2020. Once the certificate holders are ready, renewal will be easier than ever with the arrival of AIMS connectED. The online learning platform will give AIMS certificate holders the opportunity to earn the 4.0 Continuing Education Units

(CEUs) they need to renew their Operations, Maintenance, Inspection and Aquatics certifications.

AIMS call for presentations now open

Have you always wanted to be an AIMS International instructor, but didn't know how to get involved? Well, now is your chance! AIMS is now soliciting instructors for its annual safety seminar and online education programs. If you are a subject matter expert or simply have a great idea for an educational course that you'd like to see included in the seminar or on-line learning platform, AIMS connectED, please visit aimsintl.org/get-involved/be-an-instructor.

Follow @aimsintl on Facebook and Instagram for industry updates and AIMS International news.

From all of us at AIMS, enjoy your summer and stay SAFE!

Space for this AIMS page is provided courtesy of *Amusement Today* as a corporate partner of AIMS Intl. Content is provided by AT & AIMS.



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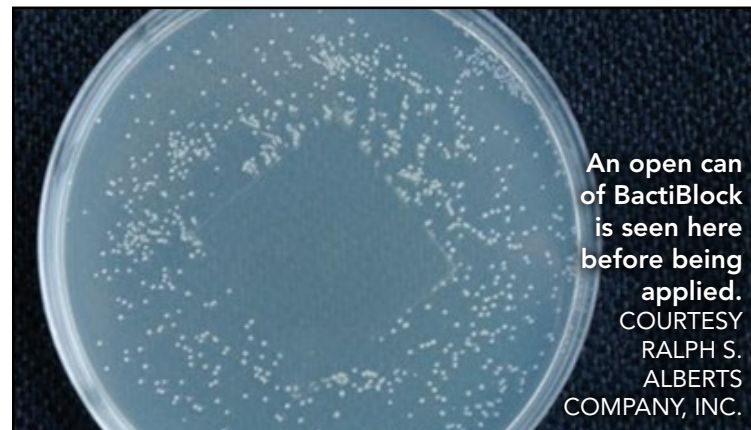
Continued from page 40

cases depends on wear and environmental conditions, the antimicrobial performance can be expected to endure for several years.

Alberts was asked about use on existing rides. "Currently, we are only applying the coating to components at our facility. However, within our Oil & Gas Division — **Alberts Spray Solutions** — we have multiple mobile spray rigs for the application of polyurea secondary containment liners. We are in the process of converting them to use for this specific coating; therefore, we anticipate being able to provide the service on-site soon under certain criteria."

The past two decades, the R.S. Alberts Company has been working with Indianapolis based **Accessa**, its paint/coating supplier.

"We've had a long-standing relationship with our paint partner for more than 20 years. They've always been very supportive of our desire to provide our customer base with the highest quality, and most durable products on the market, all while pushing the envelope with creative theming and geometric designs," said Alberts. "With health and safety being our number one priority, this



An open can of BactiBlock is seen here before being applied.
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coating adds to that focus. We are grateful for the partnership that has allowed us to bring this important development to the industry, at such a critical time."

Initial response, even during these unusual circumstances, has been quite good, Alberts explained. "The feedback and inquiries have been extremely positive. Most all industries are in pure survival mode but are starting to develop and implement plans for reopening that adhere to CDC and OSHA recommended guidelines. This product allows companies to go above and beyond just the basic guidelines and can be an important aspect of their marketing strategy, helping create the reassurance that will be paramount in getting guests back in the parks quickly."

Also the company recently introduced two additional products for the amusement

industry: touchless electrostatic surface sanitation along with GCSSD200, a surface sanitizer and disinfectant.

The electrostatic product is a hospital-grade disinfectant with EPA recommended COVID-19 disinfectant. The chemicals have quick kill times, leave little to no residue, are non-toxic to both people and the environment, and are designed to continue disinfecting long after application.

The sanitizer and disinfectant, also hospital-grade, use multiple EPA listed ingredients that have explicit kill claims against 99.9% of illness-causing germs and bacteria including human coronavirus.

The R.S. Alberts Company also serves other business sectors including: simulation, medical and healthcare, construction, electronics, apparel and sports, industrial and aviation.

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Wibit develops, offers water-safe face mask

BOCHOLT, Germany — **Wibit Sports**, known for its inflatable obstacle courses that have erupted in popularity over the last decade, has developed a new product for use during the global pandemic. Face masks are critical in helping prevent the spread of COVID-19, but the current line-up of face masks are mostly unsuitable for water sports.

Wibit has introduced the world's first protective water face mask designed to allow unlimited fun in the water. The Wibit WaterMask is made of neoprene, is comfortable to wear and easy to open and close. Slits on both sides of the mask make breathing simple. When a person dives into the water, the mask fills with water but the specially designed drainage opening in the center allows it to drain immediately when that person surfaces. Slits on the side of the mask ensure that air is available for easy breathing. Because it is a neoprene mask, air is not drawn through the mask, but rather redirected in and out the sides of the mask. The mask has openings for the ears and is secured behind the head with Velcro. Should it accidentally come off in the water, the mask will float. As with all Wibit products, the WaterMask is suitable for any type of water — fresh or salt, chlorinated or natural.

"This innovation is another step into the new normality we are facing. It will re-enable fun on the water, may it be the open sea, lakes or



swimming pools," says **Romann Rademacher**, CEO of Wibit Sports. "This is a game-changing product and unique in the world. We are happy to support many areas, not only aquaparks, but all business connected to water, such as life-guards, paddleboats, canoes or SUP rentals, and many more. We expect that even showering in public pools is possible again."

The WaterMask is available in three sizes (S, M, L) and with a minimum order quantity of 100 pieces. Purchasing is handled through Wibit's extensive distribution network. Utility and design patent applications have been filed.

— Jeffrey Seifert



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